

Resistance starts as violence sweeps Syria!

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

Sectarian violence is spreading across Syria with the blessing of the new Syrian regime in Damascus – itself a loose coalition of the sectarian militias that brought down Bashar al Assad’s popular front government at the behest of NATO, Israel and the feudal Arab oil princes. The old defence ministry has been replaced by leaders of the Central Asian, Turkic and feudal Arab terror gangs including former members of Al Qaeda. Out of the five Brigadier-Generals listed, three are non-Syrian Al Qaeda foreign fighters. Other Islamic militia commanders promoted include a Jordanian, a Turk, a Central Asian and an Albanian.

On the diplomatic front, the new Syrian regime is striving for international recognition. The German and French foreign ministers have already held talks with Syria’s de facto leader, Ahmed al-Sharaa, also known as Abu Muhammed al-Jolani, in Damascus. Their first demand is the closure of the Russian bases on Syrian soil while Germany’s Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock says that Europe would support Syria’s “transitional government” if the political talks include all ethnic and religious groups in the country. Easier said than done.



• Syrian Christians demonstrate against sectarian attacks.

The Russians aren’t going anywhere at the moment. Although the Russians are redeploying some of their Mediterranean naval forces to Libya they clearly want to retain a presence on the Syrian coast. They say that the 2017 agreement with the Assad government that gave the Russians a 49-year lease for the Tartus air-base and the naval base at Latakia is still valid – and that also seems to be the thinking of Al-Sharaa these days. The transitional government had “strategic interests” in maintaining good ties with Russia, describing it as the “second most powerful country in the world” he says. “We don’t want Russia to exit Syria in a way that would not be befitting for its long-standing relations with the nation.” Russia’s UN envoy Vasili Nebenzia echoed this sentiment, stating that Syria’s new de facto authorities have shown an interest in preserving ties with Moscow and its military presence in the region.

Syria’s new leader says both

Russia and the Islamic Republic of Iran are important partners for Syria and expressed a desire to maintain positive relations with both.

But the “transitional government” is paralysed by the deep divisions within its ranks that reflect the conflicting positions of the powers that arm and fund the sectarian militias that now control most of the country. The Turks want the Kurds out of the autonomous northern Syrian enclave that they set up in 2016 under American protection while the Muslim Brotherhood, which also enjoys some Turkish support, vies with the Saudi- and Arab Gulf-backed sectarian militias for control of the towns and cities of central Syria. Meanwhile, the Israelis are calling for an international summit that would discuss splitting Syria into small sectarian cantons as it was during French colonial rule in the 1920s.

At the same time, resistance is growing. Fourteen members of

the puppet regime’s new security forces were killed and many more wounded in an ambush by the resistance in the Tartus countryside in western Syria last month.

Last month the Syrian Resistance movement, believed to be led by former members of the old

Baath party that led the country for over 60 years, denounced the “armed gangs” that had taken over “with the approval and blessing of America, the Zionist occupation state, and NATO...

“The continuation of the armed gangs affiliated with the new administration in committing massacres against our people will be met with targeting your terrorist elements and leaders.

“Our Syrian popular resistance has many surprises in store, and our youth are capable of reaching you in the middle of Damascus. We call on all concerned parties inside and outside Syria to force the terrorist administration represented by Ahmed al-Sharaa to stop its criminal operations against the Syrian people, so that a bloodbath does not occur, which is now just around the corner with the escalation of their terrorism and criminality. We are still waiting for the blood shed to stop so that it is not said that we are instigators of sedition. We only want Syria to be Arab and independent, as it was for all components of our people.”

FUND

The December fighting fund ended with £840 in the bag by the end of the month. Many thanks to the Dagenham comrade who gave us £402 and another who sent in £40 with his Christmas card from Liverpool. By the end of the month we had raised £3,294. Not bad but still sadly short of our target by £206.

Now we start the January appeal. We desperately need the £3,500 to hit our target and we’ve got until the end of the month to do so. Can you help us to do it?

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

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Trump takes centre stage

Two weeks still to go to Inauguration Day but Donald Trump's already been grabbing the headlines urging Canadians to join the USA and threatening to take over Greenland and the Panama Canal, which he says is now under Chinese control. While few take his pantomime threats seriously it's amusing to see venal British and European politicians, so used to licking the boots of Uncle Sam, on the receiving end of American abuse for a change.

They turned a blind eye to Israel's genocide in Gaza. They egged on the proxy war against Russia and crippling sanctions on China. Now they're recoiling in horror at The Donald mouthing off against his own allies. Now they know that "Making America Great Again" can only happen at their expense.

The Trump team are already talking about resuming the dialogue with Democratic Korea and floating proposals to end the Ukraine war that go some way to meeting the legitimate demands of the Russian Federation. We can only hope that this will lead to serious negotiations to normalise US relations with the DPR Korea and end the war in eastern Europe.

Trump says he'll end the war in Ukraine at a stroke when he's back at the helm. But we've heard it all before over Korea. Although he promised much when he was last in the White House he still remained a prisoner of the most aggressive elements of the American ruling class. What Trump says and what he can or actually does do is another matter altogether.

Meanwhile...

...Elon Musk, the South African-born tech tycoon said to be the richest man in the world, has clearly got some time on his hands. Not content with the prospect of a key role in the new Trump administration, he's now calling on Nigel Farage to stand down as leader of the Reform Party and scheming to get rid of Keir Starmer before the next general election.

Musk is often called a "kingmaker" in the bourgeois media of the USA – possibly by some unaware of the tragic fate of the first man to bear that mantle: Richard Neville, the Earl of Warwick, who was killed in 1471 during the feudal struggle for the throne known as the War of the Roses.

Musk is much like George Soros, another immensely rich American, who used his money to finance anti-communist movements in eastern Europe in the 1980s and prop up the venal pro-NATO regimes that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the European people's democracies in 1991. Soros, a supporter of the American Democrats, poses as a philanthropist. Musk, who likes to be thought of as a "libertarian", is a Trump Republican. But their common underlying philosophy is simply that of end days capitalism and inherited wealth.

Musk can say and do what he likes in the USA – he became an American citizen in 2002 – but poking his nose into our affairs is totally unacceptable.

Not just an option but an imperative

by Jack Perry Jr

The UK–China relationship has undoubtedly faced significant challenges in recent years. Diplomatic tensions, evolving global priorities, and domestic political shifts have all contributed to what can best be described as a delicate period. Amidst these challenges, however, there is a growing recognition that collaboration – particularly through business – presents a path forward.

As someone who engages extensively with both British and Chinese enterprises, I am often asked about the key to fostering stronger co-operation. Chinese businesses frequently seek clarity on where they can and cannot invest in the UK. While the British government does outline certain parameters, these are often not communicated with sufficient transparency or consistency. For Chinese investors, inconsistent communication fosters hesitancy. They seek assurances that their investments are secure and aligned with British policy frameworks. It is crucial that we address this issue head-on. If the UK can provide a clearer and more robust framework for foreign investment, it will encourage greater economic collaboration, particularly in sectors vital for both nations.

The UK remains an exceptional destination for investment. Its innovation ecosystem, world-class universities and leadership in sectors such as renewable energy, advanced manufacturing and artificial intelligence are globally recognised. Chinese businesses bring unparalleled expertise, resources and ambition. Together, we have the opportunity to drive advancements that benefit both nations and the wider world.

One such area of collaboration is the transition to net-zero.

Renewable energy offers immense potential for joint ventures, especially in battery storage technology – a critical component of future energy systems. Petroleum companies, in particular, can benefit from UK–China co-operation as they navigate the complexities of transitioning to greener operations. By combining the UK's innovative approaches with China's production capabilities and commitment to high-quality development, we can accelerate the shift toward sustainable energy solutions.

The fields of education and healthcare also represent immense opportunities for partnership. In education, the UK and China could explore combined programmes, research exchanges and innovative models that blend the strengths of both systems. In healthcare, particularly the scientific side of healthcare, collaboration could lead to breakthroughs in biotechnology. The south-eastern region in China, for example, is rapidly emerging as a hub for high-tech solutions in biotechnology and healthcare innovation. The UK, with its strong tradition of medical research and cutting-edge technology, is well-positioned to complement these efforts. By working together, we can advance not only healthcare systems but also global well-being.

The rise of artificial intelligence (AI) represents another frontier where the UK and China can work together. AI has the potential to both divide and unite, depending on how we approach it. On one hand, different regulatory frameworks and ethical considerations could create friction. On the other, AI offers unparalleled opportunities to enhance connectivity, improve global systems and solve complex problems across industries.

If we focus on aligning our efforts – prioritising ethics, legal frameworks and shared growth goals – we can harness AI to strengthen our ties and drive mutual progress.

China's emphasis on high-quality development resonates deeply in this context. By focusing on long-term, sustainable growth, China is setting a global example that aligns with the UK's ambitions for innovation and green development. The London Export Corporation (LEC) played a key role in bringing Western businesses to China, fostering enduring connections. Today, through our subsidiary, LEC Industries, we continue to prioritise technology and sustainability as the cornerstones of our work. These values are shared and supported by the 48 Group, which remains committed to building bridges of trust and co-operation.

The road ahead is clear: UK–China collaboration is not merely an option; it is an imperative. Through open dialogue, mutual respect and a shared commitment to progress, we can overcome challenges and achieve extraordinary outcomes. Whether through renewable energy, AI, biotechnology or education, the opportunities for partnership are boundless. Let us seize them with ambition, clarity and a focus on building a future that benefits both nations.

As history has shown, when the UK and China come together, the results can be transformative. It is time for us to write the next chapter.

The author is Chairman of the 48 Group that is dedicated to promoting trade between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United Kingdom and the CEO of the London Export Corporation

Global Times



Workers' Notes

by New Worker correspondent

Pro-Palestinian activists interrupted their seasonal celebrations to join an emergency vigil in London's West End on 28th December against the Israeli military's systematic destruction of hospitals in Gaza. The vigil in Piccadilly Circus was organised by the Health Workers 4 Palestine campaign that was co-founded by a group of doctors in October 2023 to combat the censorship they experienced when standing up for the rights of Palestinian health



workers and the rights of Palestinians to healthcare.

On 27th December Israeli troops raided the Kamal Adwan Hospital, the last major health

facility in Northern Gaza, removed all the patients and staff, and set fire to it. Hussam Abu Safia, the director of the hospital, was arrested and is still in Israeli

detention.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) issued a statement saying it was appalled by the raid: "The systematic disman-

ting of the health system and a siege for over 80 days on North Gaza puts the lives of the 75,000 Palestinians remaining in the area at risk." The statement added that "some people were reportedly stripped and forced to walk toward southern Gaza".

The Gaza Ministry of Health says that now all three public hospitals in Northern Gaza, the Kamal Adwan, Beit Hanoun and Indonesian hospitals, have been "taken out of service by Israel's offensive".

On 4th January WHO Director-General chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the agency had received "no updates on the safety and wellbeing" of Hussam Abu Safia.

Happy Hour 2025

by New Worker correspondent

According to the 18th Century carol we get 12 drummers drumming on the 12th day of Christmas in addition to the partridge in a pear tree. But the bosses of the top 100 Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) companies will do far better than that.

For at midday on Monday 6th January their 100 CEOs' wages would exceed the median UK worker's full-time annual salary before lunchtime on what would be the first day back at work for many. According to the High Pay Centre (HPC) even this figure represents a footstep towards a more egalitarian Britain as last year bosses had to toil for another two hours to match the annual wages of their employees.

The HPC says that median FTSE 100 CEO pay is presently £4.22 million (excluding often very generous pensions) or £1,298 per hour or £22 per minute, which is 113 times the median full-time worker's pay of £37,430. While this assumes a working week of 62.5 hours, this 'work' often involves eating lavish dinners in sunny climes. The CEO's average pay has

risen by 2.5 per cent over the last year, while the median worker's pay has increased by seven per cent, due largely to trade union struggles.

Not all CEOs are scraping by on a miserable £4.22 million, however.

In May the CEO of Tesco, Ken Murphy, had a salary of £9.9 million which was more than double the previous year and represented 430 times the pay of the average Tesco employee.

But he is a pauper compared with the CEO of pharmaceutical company AstraZeneca, Pascal Soriot. He continues to top the annual league table with a £18.7 million reward for 2024. This was objected to by some out-voted shareholders at the AGM, but their interest was largely concerned with wanting more for dividends than wages for workers.

Coming up just behind him are Erik Engstrom, of data company RelX, and Tufan Erginbilgiç, CEO of Rolls-Royce, who both earn £13.6 million.

While we are grateful for the HPC's beaver among company reports and official statistics, they are not a very good guide about what should be done about this situation. In November the HPC published a "Charter for Fair Pay" that made some modest suggestions for implementing Starmer's Employment Rights

Bill. These are largely concerned with "strengthening worker voice in business decision-making, encouraging a more participatory business culture" so that businesses will "boost pay by empowering workers to claim a fairer share of the wealth created by their labour".

As the HPC is supported by the Financial Fairness Trust, run by a huge Edinburgh based investment trust, it is clearly in favour of making reforms rather than revolution. It wants to make capitalism nicer so that workers do not get too angry and march on the Stock Exchange.

It has devised a "Fair Reward Framework" for working out pay that will produce an "alternative approach to top pay focused on responsible stakeholder stewardship and fair and proportionate outcomes for all the different constituencies that contribute to business success".

The modest improvements its Charter suggests include providing workers with information on their workplace rights and preventing them from manipulating votes on trade union recognition. Who could object to that?

It also wants seats for worker directors on company boards, as is compulsory in other European countries. That also sounds good but it is simply a way of incorporating unions into the management structure. As night

follows day worker directors speedily become more directors than workers.

HPC also wants targets for worker share-ownership and profit-sharing schemes, similar to existing targets for gender diversity on boards or pension fund investment in UK growth companies. Profit-sharing schemes sound good but workers should be wary of them. Not only can they become loss-sharing schemes, they help divide workers in different firms.

Another modest, some would say pointless, reform is new rules on pay disclosure for private employers to provide greater transparency on the pay of their highest earners, as is the case of public and voluntary sector employers. That seems to be what HPC are doing already.

On the wages front

by New Worker correspondent

Now that Easter eggs are appearing in supermarkets it is an appropriate time to take out our crystal ball and attempt to look forward to forthcoming battles. While predictions are an uncertain science, it is reasonable to assume that the

Government's announcement that the review bodies for public sector workers will be awarding rises of 2.8 per cent for 2025 will not be universally accepted.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) was particularly angry, denouncing the fact that "the Government has told nursing staff they are worth as little as £2 extra a day, less than the price of a cup of coffee". They weren't so happy last year at doctors getting 22 per cent when they got 5.5 per cent, so there is a good chance that anger will be translated into action.

Unison agreed that the 2.8 per cent was pathetic and deplored the Government's use of the "discredited" pay review body to decide the figure. It also said that if the 2025 rise and modernising the pay bands come from the same pot, NHS staff will end up with less.

The same union warns that "problems with the pay scales have led to lots of local strikes". These are likely to continue, it warns.

The same 2.8 per cent figure will affect schoolteachers. Their main union, the NEU, speedily retorted that "teacher pay has been cut by over a fifth in real terms since 2010, hitting teacher living standards and damaging the competitive position of

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teaching against other graduate professions”.

To make matters worse, the Department for Education has announced that future pay rises will come out of existing school budgets. At a time when many schools need major repairs this is not good news.

It remains to be seen if the initial outrage translates into action. First off the mark for industrial action in the New Year was transport union RMT, who called a strike on New Year's Eve and 2nd January that forced Avanti West Coast to warn passengers against travel and to announce drastically reduced services.

This strike was by train managers and concerns rest-day working. RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch blamed Avanti West Coast for creating “this dispute by ignoring train managers’ concerns and presenting offers those members deemed unacceptable”. If unresolved the action will continue every Sunday until 25th May.

RMT also organised strike action on the Elizabeth Line, where the Control Room went on a carefully timed strike on New Years Eve that would have caused well-watered citizens trouble getting home the next morning. The dispute was over improved holiday entitlements and reductions in working hours. Mick Lynch said: “These disputes highlight the refusal of

employers to address legitimate concerns about pay, working hours, and safety. Our members are standing firm for fair treatment, and the companies must come to the table with serious offers to resolve these issues.”

At Princes Food plants in Bradford, Cardiff, Glasgow, Long Sutton and Wisbech, workers are taking strike action after similar action at Cardiff last month failed to force owners into making an improved pay offer. The dispute centres around the fact that the previous owner, Japanese company Mitsubishi, had made an offer of four to seven per cent that has now been withdrawn by the new owner, the Italian multinational Newlat SPA. They are now offering only three per cent.

Unite the union warns that supplies of Branston pickle and Crosse & Blackwell soups, to say nothing of their own brand tins and jars of meat and fish, will dry up.

Unite leader Sharon Graham said: “Newlat need to get back round the negotiating table before its customers discover they won't have any products on their shelves. Our members work in back-breaking roles on low pay and want a fair slice of the pie.”

“Newlat make 20 per cent of all their revenues in the UK and are making money off the backs of these workers. Yet they want to short change our members. Unite won't stand for such behaviour and back our members 100 per

cent.”

The union's full-time officer for food, drink and agriculture, Paul Travers, pointed out that: “Newlat borrowed huge sums of money to buy Princes and is now looking to cut corners and penny pinch to pay that money back. Unite won't let them do so with our members' livelihoods. Newlat can avoid this strike, which is one of their own making, by coming back to the negotiating table with a new and improved pay deal for our members.”

A False Dawn

by New Worker
correspondent

It was fortunate for him that Monday's speech on the NHS by Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer was overshadowed by the latest intervention into British politics by American tech multi-billionaire Elon Musk, this time on the question of the child sex cases in the north of England.

Musk's remarks included unflattering comments about Starmer's role in that affair while Director of Public Prosecutions – so he was able to avoid close scrutiny about the contents of his speech that promised of “millions of extra appointments signed, sealed and delivered” and an “AI revolution in healthcare”.

The details of these vague pieties only became apparent in

the Downing Street press release issued immediately afterwards, which predictably demonstrated that the NHS was going to contract out more and more work to the “independent”, or rather private, sector. In particular it will focus on gynaecology waiting lists and the record number of orthopaedics patients.

The modest objective of this is to hit the 18-week NHS waiting time standard for operations.

This means the private sector will be providing one million extra appointments for NHS patients, all funded by the NHS.

David Hare, CEO of the Independent Healthcare Providers Network (IHPN), the trade body for private medicine, politely concealed his delight at the bonanza his members are about to gain when he said: “Independent providers already treat millions of NHS patients every year, and this agreement builds on these strong foundations by making full use of existing capacity in the sector, ... all delivered free at the point of use and paid for at NHS prices.”

That is the real meaning of Starmer's claim that “mission-led government is about doing things differently. When the waiting lists have ballooned to 7.5 million, we will not let ideology or old ways of doing things stand in the way of getting people's lives back on track”.

Unison was quick off the mark to see through Starmer's rhetoric with its Head of

Health, Helga Pile, observing that: “Health workers have been taken for granted for years by governments and little they've heard from the prime minister on his plans will encourage them to feel differently.” She added that instead, existing NHS staff need to be paid better in order to prevent staff leaving and recruiting more. “Without proper investment in staff, there can be no world-class NHS, no improvements in patient care, reduction in the backlog or increased efficiency of services. Further delays in getting a grip on the social care crisis won't help.”

Unite took a similar line, saying that “the government must ensure that its reforms are not allowed to become an opportunity for the private sector to generate excessive profits from the taxpayer”. That, however, is the very essence of the strategy for the NHS devised by Starmer and his sidekick Wes Streeting.

The NCP badge



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

7th January 2005

THE INDIAN OCEAN disaster has touched the hearts of millions of working people in Britain. Over 160,000 people are believed to have perished in the countries hit by the earthquake and tsunami on Boxing Day. Millions more have been left homeless and destitute in the wake of the terror that struck countries from Indonesia to Somalia.

A massive £76 million has already been raised by the public in days for the disaster appeal to help the

devastated countries. It's forced the Blair Government to match the public donations pound for pound. It shamed Tony Blair into cutting short his luxury Christmas holiday in Egypt to return to London this week.

All over the world people and governments are contributing to the disaster appeals and calling for emergency action to help the survivors. People's China has rushed medical experts to the afflicted areas and is contributing millions to the aid appeal. Democratic Korea, still recovering from the terrible floods and storms of the 1990s, has chipped in donating \$150,000.

British and American politicians are flying to Asia to publicly show their concern. But there has been little comment about the fact that American monitoring stations soon realised that a massive tsunami was on its way but no real warning was passed on to the countries it was soon to deluge.

Scientists at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) realised within minutes that the Indonesian earthquake on Boxing Day would

trigger a massive tsunami in the Indian Ocean. The NOAA is part of the US military-scientific complex and they immediately alerted the US military base on the nominally British islands of Diego Garcia. But apart from some e-mails to Indonesian officials, little effort was made to warn other countries of the danger.

The Bush administration has sent Colin Powell to the distressed areas and is trumpeting its own contribution to the relief work that is still less than the money pledged by Germany and Japan.

Earthquakes and tidal waves cannot be prevented but the much of December's destruction could have been avoided if an international warning system had been in place.

Tsunami detection buoys have been used in the Pacific for over 50 years to cover the west coast of America, Hawaii and its Pacific dependencies. Just two of them at a cost of a mere \$500,000 could have provided an early warning system for the Indian Ocean.

Ukraine: Death before dishonour!

An open letter to
Workers World from
Mikhail and Alexander
Kononovich

Dear Comrades

We would like to first draw your attention, comrades, to the fact that we, communists and anti-fascists, brothers Mikhail Kononovich and Alexander Kononovich, were arrested for our many years of “Komsomol [Communist Youth League] for Peace” actions, which we held in all the cities of Ukraine, starting in 2014.

The last action was two weeks before the full-scale war of 2022 began, held near the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine with the main slogan “No to NATO – Peace for Donbas!”.

Only communist anti-fascists advocated for peace in Ukraine. We tried to prevent the “Third World War”. That is why being a communist and anti-fascist in Ukraine is already a crime.

Since our arrest on 2nd March 2022, we have been in the dungeons of the SBU (Ukrainian secret police) and prisons for eight months, subjected to beatings, torture, abuse, deprived of sleep in solitary confinement and in inhumane conditions like in Guantanamo.

Now we are under house arrest with an electronic bracelet. The Zelensky regime has deprived us of our livelihoods; we cannot work while under arrest and criminal prosecution; they want to bring us to a bestial state and poverty so that we surrender!

We were arrested without trial or investigation, without a lawyer, kidnapped and beaten to an animal state during the arrest, choked until unconscious. They brought us to the basement of the SBU where for four days, from 2nd March



to 6th March 2022, they brutally tortured us. They beat us in handcuffs every two hours, beat us with rifle butts and kicks. They broke our ribs, knocked out our teeth, broke our noses and tore Alexander's nose.

Comrades, what is the most terrible thing for a person and a man? It is the torture of his family and children! The special services of the SBU regime threatened to rape Mikhail's 13-year-old daughter in front of his eyes if he did not agree to their conditions. There were no rules there at all!

Friends, can you imagine what really happened there? When we were brought in for interrogation for the first time after several days of torture, they carried us in, because

we could not walk or even sit on our own. We did not recognise each other, although we are twin brothers and have lived together our whole lives. Instead of my brother, there was a piece of meat in front of me, disfigured by blood and bruises.

The goal of the special services was to discredit the Communist Party and the Anti-Fascist Committee of Ukraine. As leaders of the left-wing movement in Ukraine, they demanded we slander ourselves and our party comrades.

According to the [Kiev] regime, if we are communists and anti-fascists, then we are definitely working for the Russians, but this is not so! We understood that the lives of hundreds of communists

and anti-fascists all over the country depended on us, and we could not commit such a vile betrayal, even under threat of death. Better death than dishonour and betrayal!

It was precisely such torture and abuse in a Ukrainian prison that US citizen Gonzalo Lira could not withstand, and he died from his injuries.

After bold and decisive mass statements and speeches around the world by the World Federation of Democratic Youth, leftists and anti-fascists, the Zelensky regime was forced to tell the whole world that the communist brothers Mikhail and Alexander Kononovich were alive and arrested by the authorities. We were then transported from the “SBU dungeon” to a prison, where we were kept for two

months in solitary confinement without medical care and practically without food.

The Kiev pre-trial detention centre initially refused to accept and process us, fearing that we would die, and the prison would be blamed for our deaths, not the SBU. On our prison cards we had a terrible mark, “especially dangerous criminals”, and therefore we were treated like cruel terrorists. We were kept in prison without a court decision, since we were so beaten and maimed that they could not show us to anyone.

While the regime waited for two months for the traces of torture and beatings to heal, we lay on the concrete floor of the prison cell like animals without medical care and hope for life.

For the first time in May 2022 we were taken to court, where we saw our lawyer. All this time they tried to break us and force us to confess to non-existent crimes against the Zelensky regime. When this did not work, we were thrown into an overcrowded cell with Nazis and murderers.

We will never forget this day. In the cell hung the flag of Nazi, Hitlerite Germany, and on the bench lay Hitler's book *Mein Kampf*. The goal of the regime was still to finally break us. Zelensky's regime failed to do this with beatings and solitary confinement, so they decided to break us communists by putting us into Nazi and racist cells with repeat offenders.

The cell was not large, made for 12 people, but there were 20 people in it. We did not have our own bed (bunk) for more than three months, so we slept in turns. Alexander was in the same conditions, only in a different building. We were constantly attacked, starved and deprived of sleep. But we are communists and

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• Kononovich brothers.

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could not give in to the Ukrainian regime.

We will not surrender

Under no circumstances did we have the right to surrender. We decided this back in the SBU basement – no matter what they do to us, we will not surrender and would rather die than admit to the fabricated charges against us, the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Anti-Fascist Committee of Ukraine.

As a result, we were officially charged under Article 109, Parts 1 and 2 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine (armed rebellion and attempted overthrow of power). Allegedly the two of us, with weapons in hand, wanted to overthrow Zelensky and seize power in Ukraine! Russia has been fighting in Ukraine for the third year and cannot do this, but we, two communists and anti-fascists, the Kononovich brothers, wanted to do this on our own. The history of mankind has never known a more stupid accusation!

Under pressure from the communist international and actions in our support around the world, as well as thanks to the unprecedented help of anti-fascists in Europe, we were released under 24-hour house arrest with the wearing of an electronic bracelet.

Now there are trials on a fabricated criminal case against us, the Kononovich brothers. The government wants to put us in prison for 10 years with confiscation of property just because we are communists and anti-fascists.

Look, our American comrades, at the “de-



• Communist leader Gennady Zyuganov delivers humanitarian aid to the Donbas.

mocracy” that the USA, European Union and NATO authorities are imposing on Ukraine! Human rights do not exist in Ukraine now. People are disenfranchised like cattle. The people of Ukraine want peace, unlike the corrupt government.

We would like to draw the attention of US communists and anti-fascists to the fact that hundreds of thousands have been repressed in Ukraine, with tens of thousands in prison, including thousands of communists and an-

ti-fascists, all those who fought for peace.

We can name several specific comrades, those who like us have nothing to lose or fear. We are all being tried or have already been convicted exclusively under political criminal articles. In particular, there is the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Head of the Anti-Fascist Committee of Ukraine, Georgy Buiko, accused under criminal article 110, facing 10 years in prison with confisca-

tion of property for “encroachment on territorial integrity”. The case is completely fabricated.

Komsomol member Sergei Novikov was sentenced to five years, under article 436, for allegedly “recognising NATO as the culprit of the start of the war in Ukraine”. The case is completely fabricated.

A member of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party, Yuri Petrovsky, was sentenced to 15 years in a strict regime prison with confiscation of property,

under article 111 for “subversive activity”, having advocated peace. The case is completely fabricated..

Member of the anti-fascist committee and communist, Anatoly Miruta, who is disabled (heart disease), was sentenced to 10 years in prison with confiscation of property, under Article 111, for “subversive activity”, having advocated peace. For him as a disabled person, this is a severe sentence. The case is completely fabricated.

If we were to list all the convicted, repressed communists, Komsomol members and anti-fascists, it would take months. Not all of our comrades were lucky enough to survive this struggle, like our friend, anti-fascist Vladimir Novikov, who was unable to withstand the torture and abuse in prison. He hanged himself in his cell with a sheet through the window bars. He left this life as a true anti-fascist, not defeated by the fascists and not betraying his comrades and his ideas! Eternal memory to the anti-fascist heroes who fell in the struggle!

Communist Party banned

We, the anti-fascist communists of Ukraine, are outlawed for the first time in post-war Europe. The Communist Party of Ukraine is officially banned as in Nazi Germany. We are being physically exterminated, destroyed to the applause of the Western world.

Ukraine is a testing ground for the implementation of modern colonial policies of external control and enslavement. The next victims of colonial policies and the purging of the left flank will be you, comrades, communists and anti-fascists of the United States of America.

We, communists and anti-fascists of Ukraine, call on you to take action and fight, be active and strong. You have nowhere else to retreat, only your physical extermination and the repetition of the fate of the Ukrainian communists.

Friends, you are stronger than you think! Thanks to you and your support, specifically we – communists Mikhail and Alexander Kononovich – remained alive. Without any pathos nor loud words, we owe you – communists and anti-fascists of Europe, South and North America – our lives.

Comrade communists and anti-fascists of the USA, we appeal to you for help. We communists of Ukraine ask you to help us and support us. Our lives and the lives of our comrades depend on it. We ask you to come out to actions in our support at the embassy and consulates of Ukraine in the USA. Be brave and honest! Be real communists and anti-fascists! We are communists, we cannot lose! And if we lose, then we are not communists!



• Free Ukrainian political prisoners! IUAFS New Year protest in Whitehall last week.

Soundtrack to a coup

by Bill Meyer

Many progressives consider the assassination of the first Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba as among the earliest and certainly best known of the many regime change operations carried out by American imperialism. In 1961, at a time when the newly elected anti-colonialist leader promised the Congolese people independence, the USA, in cahoots with the Belgian colonisers, was working to break away the economically crucial southern mining province of Katanga while at the same time plotting to assassinate this bold charismatic leader.

Now there's a fresh and extraordinary documentary look at the subject accompanied by a stunning array of jazz music. The newly released film, *Soundtrack to a Coup D'Etat*, by Belgian film-maker Johan Grimonprez, merges the dramatic political history of the African '60s with a rich score of jazz legends from the American '60s, including John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Louis Armstrong, Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln, to name but a few.

The meticulously edited film examines the coup d'état and the deep involvement of American officials, including the Dulles brothers, Adlai Stevenson and President Eisenhower, who were all tied in with the Belgian elite who profited from the virtual slave labour that extracted oil, rubber and ivory from the Katanga province, the main source of the



• Patrice Lumumba -- murdered by imperialism.

country's wealth.

It's worth recalling that the assassination took place on 17th January 1961, three days before President-elect John F Kennedy would enter the Oval Office. Coincidence? Might Kennedy have scotched the plot?

The film is loaded with rare footage and interviews from UN and Belgian TV archives, which Grimonprez interlaces with breathtaking clips of veteran jazz artists synchronised to the unfolding of historic events. Scenes from the iconic *Freedom Now Suite*, by Max Roach with vocalist Abbey Lincoln, play an important role in accenting the political turmoil during Africa's struggles for independence. Roach is quoted as saying "We do use the music as a weapon against man's inhumanity to man".

Clips from Dave and Iola Brubeck's *Real Am-*

bassadors jazz musical inform us about the role Black jazz artists unwittingly played as enforcers of US cultural hegemony in Africa. A rare clip of the Vote Dizzy (Gillespie) campaign video is set to music. Abbey Lincoln wails over Nkrumah's plans for a United States of Africa. The famous Khrushchev UN speech of him pounding on the podium is set to music, joined in rhythm by UN members clapping hands while Khrushchev moves to the music!

Eric Dolphy riffs with his bass clarinet while the King of Belgium arrives to declare independence. The film is loaded with one amazing montage after another, juxtaposing the artistry of jazz with historic visuals from African history.

As for the dialogue, Grimonprez had access to a Ukrainian translator

who worked with him on at least 10 lengthy speeches by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, whose words contribute to the ongoing narration. Shocking statements from violent mercenaries, prophetic quotes from Malcolm X, historical charts and titles are all utilised to help involve the viewer in this absorbing and educational work of art.

Several other film-makers have previously addressed this subject, most notably the revered Haitian director Raoul Peck, whose two artistic creations on the same subject, the first being the 1991 meditative documentary *Death of a Prophet* (full version on YouTube), followed by his award-winning drama *Lumumba* in 2000, set the way for further study. Another relevant film is Mads Brügger's gripping 2019 documentary *Cold Case*

Hammar skjöld, which investigates the assassination of the second UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld and covers the connection between these two specific imperialist crimes. The history of Belgian King Leopold, the tyrannical dictator responsible for the deaths of 10 million Congolese, is told in a chilling documentary, *King Leopold's Ghost* (full version on YouTube).

An interview with Grimonprez offered some telling points about Congolese history and the making of the documentary. Asked how he selected certain jazz clips, he explained: "Artists chosen for the film had direct connections with the political events of the day. Louis Armstrong was sent to the Congo and Katanga by one Dulles brother while the other one, Allen, was concocting the

coup against Lumumba." He adds: "Abbey Lincoln and Max Roach were the ones initiating, along with the Women's Radical Coalition in Harlem, the protest on the 22nd February 1961, crashing the Security Council when Adlai Stevenson was announcing the murder of Lumumba. Singer Paul Robeson and poet/writer Amiri Baraka were also present at that UN protest." He added that: "When you look at the jazz ambassadors that were sent, they were a tool within the machinery of the Cold War that the United States sent out, while underneath plotting the coup d'état. So for me, I could not but see music as a protagonist, and it happened to be jazz at that moment that was also sort of involved with the Civil Rights Movement."

Johan Grimonprez formerly taught at the New York School of Visual Arts and is now at the Belgian Royal Academy and the Film Institute in Amsterdam. One of his many films, *Shadow World*, is a riveting study of arms dealers profiting from war. Grimonprez states that: "The US defence industry is dictating foreign policy in a sense where it actually has privatised war and would go so far as to even instigate war to continue profiting from the selling of weapons."

This is a documentary not to be missed!

The film will be available on 7th January on Amazon, AppleTV, YouTube and Fandango at Home.

People's World
(USA)

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

The *New Worker* editorial of 20th December [NW:2283, 20 Dec 2024] rightly drew parallels between today's handful of Western capitalists and the lifestyles of many of the Roman emperors, who carried out an unremitting tyranny which exterminated, amongst others, the ancient families of the Roman republic thus condemning themselves to everlasting infamy.

In the young republic of Rome, prior to the Empire, the chief power was in the hands of the wealthy and aristocratic citizens, called the 'Patricians', who were supposed to be the descendants of the three original tribes of Rome. Two of these Patricians were appointed magistrates and exercised full ruling power for the period of one year. The common citizens, the 'plebs' or 'plebeians', had little more to do with the business of government than they had in the days of the kings. Gradually, however, they broke down the barrier separating the two orders. The ruling magistrates were called consuls, and it is usual to record Roman republican dates as in the consulship of so and so. The assembly that appointed them was led by the Patricians; the Senate, the most important political body, consisted of 300 men chosen by the consuls from among the Patricians. Thus shut out from office and political power, the plebeians were grievously oppressed by their wealthier fellow citizens. Then to redress their wrongs the plebeians,

in 494 BC marched out of Rome in a body and threatened to make a new city. To appease them the plebs were granted the rights to be represented by new officials, called 'tribunes', with power to veto any act of a magistrate that bore unjustly on any citizen. The plebeians soon won recognition for an assembly of their own (the concilium plebis) and forced the appointments of a commission of 10 men (decemvirs) to put the laws of the state in writing and have them engraved on 12 tablets of bronze (450 BC).

They gained the right to intermarry with the patricians and obtained admission to various public offices. The chief of these, which were established to relieve the consuls of the growing burdens of administration, was that of quaestors, or treasurers' censors, who kept the lists of the citizens, assessed taxes and supervised public morals, and the praetors or judges. The struggle was long drawn out and it was not until 367 BC that it was decided that one of the two consuls should be a plebeian. In 350 BC the plebeians were admitted to the dictatorship, which was a magistracy whereby supreme power at critical times was given to one man. The growing power of the plebeians was marked by the gradual rise of a new voting body, the comitia tributa, in which one man's vote counted for as much as another's. This developed from the plebeian assembly (which still continued to meet) by allowing patricians also to participate. After the passage of a law (lex Hortensia) in 287 BC making the acts of the plebeian assembly binding on all people, these two bodies made most of the laws for the community.

Side by side with the struggle for political power was waged an economic

struggle between rich and poor. The wealthy landowners continued to increase their estates, taking the best of the lands and increasing their herds of cattle until they controlled the public pasture. They continued the practice of lending money at ruinous interest to the small proprietors, reducing them to slavery when they could not pay. Moreover, the population of Rome was increasing fast and the soil was made poorer by primitive farming methods. The burden of constant warfare fell most heavily on the plebeians, who had to leave their small farms to fight the state's battles. Gradually, however, reforms were forced through, chief of which were the Licinian laws of 367 BC, which again revised the debt laws, limited holdings to 300 acres, and compelled the large landowners to employ a certain proportion of free labourers.

**A McKerl
Fife**

Dear Comrades

A Kuwaiti activist has been detained by Iraqi authorities and handed to the Kuwaiti government.

Salman Al Khaldi was arrested on 1st January in Iraq and extradited to Kuwait. Human rights bodies have called for his release. Alqst (a Saudi human rights body) has called for the UK Government's urgent intervention with the Kuwaiti authorities and to provide him consular assistance. He has been living in the UK as a refugee.

**John Hughes
Bahrain Freedom Movement
London**

Dear Friends

2024 has been the darkest year in the decades-long Palestinian fight for liberation. A year that showed us the worst – and the best – of

humanity.

We all watched in horror as Israel unleashed a genocide: tens of thousands killed, Gaza reduced to rubble and millions teetering on the brink of famine. Meanwhile, Western political leaders, including our own, stood complicit, green-lighting atrocities and devaluing the lives and rights of Palestinians.

But amidst this violent devastation, hope remains alive. It is founded on what we have witnessed of the best of the human spirit – the refusal of Palestinians to submit even in the face of genocide, and the commitment of millions of people – like you – who've risen in solidarity to demand justice.

Together, we've proven the power of solidarity, even in the face of attempts to repress it. Last year, we led the largest and most sustained street mobilisations in British history since the suffragette movement. We showed Palestinians – and the world – that British people stand with them. And through our network of branches we've taken our campaigns for boycott and divestment into every community across the land.

In 2025, we'll ramp up these vital community-based campaigns calling to end UK complicity in this horrific genocide. Together, we will:

- Target councils and secure more divestment commitments
- Push Barclays Bank to fully divest from Israel
- Make UK workplaces apartheid-free through union partnerships
- Escalate student activism, driving universities to cut ties with Israel
- Keep marching in our millions for a free Palestine, showing the Government that we're

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

UNTIL APRIL 2025

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

UNTIL 25 APRIL

Wellcome Collection: *Hard Graft: Work, Health and Rights*. Free exhibition. 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE.

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 Camera-man, The Poets and the Pits: Miners' Strike 40th Anniversary Exhibition*. Afternoons. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

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).

SAT 11 JAN

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Boycott Barclays, Nationwide events. See PSC website for details.

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.

MON 20 JAN

British Pregnancy Advisory Service: Fund-raising showing of *Zurawski v Texas*. 07:30–21:00, Human Rights Action Centre, 25 New Inn Yard, London, EC2A 3EA. Book on BPAS website.

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

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Demonstration opposing flights of US Global Hawk and Reaper spy drones. 13:00–15:00, RAF Fairford, Fairford, Gloucestershire, GL7 4DL.

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

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.

SUN 16 MAR

Marx Memorial Library: Annual Max Memorial Oration. 13:30 Highgate Cemetery, Swains Lane, London N6 6PJ.

THUR 20 MAR

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

THUR 27 MAR

Marx Memorial Library: Decolonising Education: learning for the future. 18:00, Onsite and Online event. Book on MML website.

THUR 3 APRIL

Socialist History Society: James Crossley on AL Morton: Life in the Radical Tradition. 19:00 Zoom meeting. Register on SHS 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

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...continued from page 8

not going anywhere.

This is what meaningful solidarity looks like. Together, we must isolate Israel politically, culturally and economically – until the walls of apartheid fall and Palestinians are liberated across all of historic Palestine.

We need to continue to use every lever of power we have to demand a ceasefire so that the immediate slaughter in Gaza is ended and aid can be delivered to those facing famine. But true liberation and the fulfilment of Palestinian rights demands more – it demands action, pressure and unwavering solidarity. Together, we will take the vital next steps towards freedom.

Ben Jamal
Director
Palestine Solidarity Campaign
London

Scottish
Political
News

by our Scottish political
affairs correspondent

Another year over so let's see what 2025 might bring to Scottish politics. Opinion polls at the end of the year suggest that Scottish Labour is sharing in the unpopularity of Sir Keir Starmer and that the SNP will make a comeback. One poll put support for independence at 60 per cent, but no-one takes that very seriously, including the SNP leadership. Indeed, in his Christmas and New Year messages First Minister John Swinney carefully ignored the 'I' word entirely, instead pledging "to eradicate

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child poverty, to grow the economy, to tackle the climate crisis and to improve our public services". Something we have heard a few times before.

Meanwhile we're still waiting to see how the SNP plan to find funds to substitute benefits lost by the two-child benefit cap – but only shortly before the next Holyrood elections and not sooner, lest the voters forget to be grateful by the time they get to the polls.

Swinney's pious declaration is aimed mainly at Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar, who has often been described as a branch manager rather than a leader. He has verbally opposed some of Starmer's "difficult" decisions, such as the two-child benefit cap and the winter fuel payments, but he needs to do something more practical to stave off a collapse in Labour's fortunes. Starmer's failure to lift the two-child benefit cap and similar actions such as the cuts to pensioners' winter fuel payments have done Sarwar no favours at all.

The SNP, however, also have a record in government on matters that have been under their control for 17 years. There is little they will find easy to defend. They claim that the NHS in Scotland is 0.02 per cent better than that in England but that's not saying much. Despite opinion polls saying support for independence is high, the same polls say that matters such as NHS waiting lists and the growing number of rats in Glasgow are more important to voters these days.

Some credit John Swinney for the SNP pick-up on the grounds that the veteran nationalist politician is far more capable than his hapless predecessor, Humza Yousaf. Others cite the rise of the Reform party. Although Faragist growth is less than in England it is, nevertheless, real and it benefits the SNP as it further splits the unionist vote.

Much will depend on the long-running Branchform investigation into SNP finances that started in July 2021. Questions have been asked as to why the Crown Office has neither formally started prosecutions nor cleared the senior SNP figures involved.

A Seasonal Toast

One of the flagship policies of the SNP Government came under scrutiny just before Christmas and predictably was once again found wanting. This was the Minimum Unit Price (MUP) for alcohol, intended to discourage excessive consumption of alcohol by raising the prices of very cheap drinks.

This has just risen from the initial 50 to 65 pence per unit, the first rise since it was introduced in 2018 after a heroic regard action by the Scotch Whisky Association. Their products were not directly affected, but raising the prices of very cheap beverages has had a knock-on effect on more refined products. The extra money goes to retailers and not to fund health initiatives.

The measure has brought great joy to managers of supermarkets over the border in Berwick-upon-Tweed and Carlisle, although perhaps not the shelf-stackers whose workload has greatly increased due to having to keep up with the demand from Scottish visitors. Jeff Bezos has had his billions increased by Amazon selling in Scotland at English prices, a margin which has recently widened. A recent purchase of just two bottles of supermarket whisky in London saved this correspondent £15.00. North of the border, small shops and supermarkets alike report an increase in shop-lifting and falling sales.

Another side-effect is

the rise of counterfeit and illicit alcohol produced abroad. Heriot-Watt University's International Centre for Brewing and Distilling say this is growing in the UK, in particular a batch of counterfeit vodka imitating a cheap Scottish brand has been found to be contaminated with dangerous chemicals.

Annemarie Ward, former CEO of Faces and Voices of Recovery (FAVOR) UK, notes that since 2018 alcohol-related deaths have risen by 9.6 per cent. She added that even "Public Health Scotland acknowledges that individuals experiencing alcohol dependence are substituting essential needs, like food, to afford alcohol at increased prices". Indeed there were 1,277 alcohol-related deaths in 2023, the highest figure since 2008. The SNP respond that this would be higher without MUP.

Some people, such as Alcohol Focus Scotland, think that the measure is a great success because the Scottish death rate is now only 1.6 times higher than in England rather than 2.0 as in 2001. But in 2022 there were also 1,051 drug-related deaths. Drug deaths in Scotland are 2.7 times above the English level, suggesting that some people priced out of drink have taken up the syringe.

One of the much-delayed ferries is due to go into service on Monday, only six years late. Even this did not go as planned. On Saturday it was announced that it had problems with its sewage system and that a day at sea for journalists had been cancelled.

The ship's 'green' credentials have also been found wanting. It was hailed as a triumph of green technology, but it turns out that its 'carbon footprint' will be much greater than the ship it replaces. Each year it will emit 10,391 equivalent tonnes of CO₂ compared with 7,732 for the 31-year-old ship. While the owners say this is due to the new ship's greater size, the liquified natural gas (LNG) it uses is much less climate-friendly than its advocates claim. It needs to be kept at a very low temperature, which needs energy. In addition, the LNG has to be imported from Qatar, meaning that it would be more environmentally friendly to use old fashioned diesel. At the same time it was discovered that repairs to the existing ships had cost £100 million because of the necessity of keeping them going due to the delays to their replacements.

Ferries Saga

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Stop Ukrainian Nazism!

by Theo Russell

A candlelit vigil was held in Whitehall last Saturday to remember the thousands of journalists, bloggers, politicians, activists, priests, pensioners and sportspeople who have been arrested, and many tortured or murdered, since the February 2014 NATO-backed coup in Kiev.

The event was organised by International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity (IUAFS), which has been campaigning for six years in solidarity with anti-fascists and democrats in Ukraine who have been arrested for opposing the war, organising Second World War commemorations, allegedly working with Russian forces such as organising humanitarian supplies or corridors, or simply for posts on social media.

In January 2024 Chilean-American blogger Gonzalo Lira died in prison in the eastern Ukraine city of Kharkov, where he

had been imprisoned for eight months charged with “justifying Russia’s war efforts” in Ukraine. He had lived in Ukraine for many years with his family and was a globally known critic of the Zelensky regime.

Despite calls for his release from the likes of Elon Musk and Tucker Carlson, the US government and their embassy in Kiev took no action to help him. The British and EU governments stayed silent too.

Only days after Lira’s death an 82-year-old citizen, Yuri Chernishov, received 15 years in prison with all his property seized – effectively a life sentence – on charges of sending information on Ukrainian troops to an alleged Russian contact. Footage from the courtroom shows him shouting at his jailers and branding them “fascists”.

Since 2014 Ukraine has been a corrupt and lawless state, with Banderite (Ukrainian fascist) organisations such as the Azov Battalion and the Hitler-admiring Right Sec-



tor penetrating the army, police and intelligence services.

Many civilians have been beaten and tortured in secret prison camps where it’s common for them to be kept standing-up in holes in the ground for days on end. The evidence is all available on the web in photos, videos and eyewitness accounts for anyone to find, but the Western mass media shows no interest.

There has never been any investigation into the killing of over 40 peaceful

anti-fascist protesters when the Trade Unions House in Odessa was surrounded and petrol bombed by a mob of nationalists and football “ultras” on 2nd May 2014.

Tens of thousands of Ukrainians have received long prison sentences, with all their property confiscated, for ‘crimes’ such as posting Soviet era greetings on social media, for continuing in their jobs as teachers, railway, gas and health workers in areas that were under the control of

Russian forces.

After the Russian intervention in February 2022, areas recaptured by Ukrainian forces were ‘cleansed’ by Kiev’s forces and far-right units, and many local officials and ordinary citizens were brutally murdered.

One such case was reported in March 2022 by the *Daily Mail*: “The pro-Russian mayor of a city in eastern Ukraine who welcomed President Vladimir Putin’s invasion was ‘shot dead’ after be-

ing kidnapped from his home. Several mayors and other Ukrainian officials have been killed since the outbreak of war, many reportedly by Ukrainian state agents after engaging in de-escalation talks with Russia.”

Many other local officials suffered the same fate, including in the town of Bucha, near Kiev, where the deaths of people shot by a punitive police unit led by a notorious Russian fascist were attributed to Russian forces in our media.

The whole world knows that since 2014 the new pro-NATO regime in Kiev has treated Russian-speaking Ukrainians as second-class citizens. Over 20 per cent of Ukrainians consider Russian their native language, but around 80 per cent also speak and read Russian.

Russian has been removed as an official language in Ukraine. Russian books, banned in all educational settings and libraries, have all been destroyed by the authorities

African communists stand by Ukrainian resistance

by New Worker correspondent

Activists from the South African Communist Party, the Zimbabwe Communist Party and the Communist Party of Swaziland have launched a new branch of International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity (IUAFS) at a protest in Johannesburg on 27th December. The protest was held in co-ordination with the Union of Emigrants and Political Prisoners of Ukraine.

Members of the National Education, Health &

Allied Workers’ Union also joined a protest outside the US Consulate General in

Johannesburg. A memorandum was handed in to the consulate that outlined

the long history of Western destabilisation and support of fascist terrorists in

Ukraine.

The memorandum demanded an immediate ceasefire, followed by a peace settlement, the dissolution of AFRICOM (United States Africa Command) and the removal of all American troops from African soil.

The new, organisation, International Anti-Fascist Solidarity with Ukraine, displayed a banner showing the flag of the pre-1991 Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Leading members of the Zimbabwe Communist Party taking part in the protest included General

Secretary Ngqabutho Nicholas Mabheba and National Political Commissar Ian Beddowes, who is also the African Co-ordinator of International Anti-Fascist Solidarity with Ukraine.

A message of congratulations for the anti-fascist event in Johannesburg has been sent from IUAFS in Britain, adding: “We are amazed at the totally unexpected news that a branch of IUAFS has been established in Africa. Please pass our comradely greetings to all the organisations and individuals who took part from our comrades and activists in Britain.”



Lithuanian patriots struggle for peace!

by Anthony Lee

Today we can observe very contradictory political processes taking place in Lithuania. Unfortunately Ukrainian flags fly there just like in many other, but not all, European countries. In some places pro-Ukrainian slogans are even heard, such as: “Let’s support the Ukrainian military! They will win!” More and more often however, we can already hear opposite statements: “Russia cannot be defeated. Ukrainian forces are weakening and losing the war.” Most Europeans want peace and believe that there is no reason to support or prolong a distant and unwanted war.

As we know, support for the Ukrainians and their armed forces has raised Lithuania’s military budget to almost three billion euros. This is a huge amount for Lithuania. And, unfortunately, the fruits of wrong political tactics are bitter – more than 33 per cent of the Lithuanian population lives well below the poverty line. This is the reason why the Lithuanian people stand for an end to the war and demand a more peaceful policy for Lithuania.

On 20th December 2024 a public protest took place in the city of Siauliai in Lithuania. The demonstration was called by the Socialist Popular Front. During the action, several brave Lithuanian anti-fascists stood in the central square, holding post-



ers with very specific slogans: “Sponsorship of Kiev is sponsorship of terrorism directed against Ukrainians”, “Zelensky is eating our money”, and other messages reflecting the position of a significant part of Lithuanian citizens.

A participant in the action, anti-fascist Zhilvinas Razmin, said: “The ruling parties in the Seimas (Lithuanian parliament) and other places unanimously support the war in Ukraine, they support the Maidan in Georgia, and they exploit us and our people.

“What is the amount of social pensions these days? Most of us receive only two to three hundred euros. At the same time, they (the government) are increasingly purchasing weapons worth hundreds of millions of euros. We must strive to demand and maintain peace. We should not sit at home. We should not be silent and we must express our position. Do we really

want Lithuania to be dragged into war and for our cities to be destroyed?”

Razmin emphasised that: “It is necessary to suspend the construction of military bases and military factories, such as the plant of the German concern Rheinmetall and others. Lithuania must be an independent, neutral state.”

A peaceful status can lead to the revival and restoration of Lithuania’s prosperity. War-mongering and inciting Russophobia can only harm Lithuania. Landsbergism (the cult of leader of the pro-NATO counter-revolution that overthrew Soviet power in Lithuania) struck our land, it undermined our roots. People continue to flee to the West (and sometimes to the East), and, in fact, the country is now devastated. And at the same time, the number of soldiers of the occupying German army in our country is sharply increasing. Civil

repression is also intensifying: the homes of anti-fascists are being searched, political cases are being brought under the guise of the criminal code and, unfortunately, thousands of Lithuanians are being victimised and forced to flee.

Tough measures are currently being taken against anti-fascist leaders in the city of Siauliai in the north of the country. It was for this reason four more participants who decided to take part in the action were delayed. Their car was stopped by the police. Dmitry Kitov, who was driving the car, and three of his colleagues were forced to spend two hours at a police station. The police deliberately checked their documents for as long as possible and then forced the men to undergo a terrifying search of not only their personal belongings but also their car by a vicious police dog. When they were finally allowed to leave

the stated time frame for the protest had long

expired.

Many Lithuanians and anti-fascists are against inciting Russophobia in Lithuania including the Lithuanian People’s Party politician Professor Eduardas Vaitkus, publicists Erika Schwentchonene and Henrikas Cherniskas, director Yaras Valukenas and journalists Aurimas Drisius, Laurinas Ragelskis and Birute Dilpshene.

We hope and believe that the time will come when Lithuania will take the path of political and social progress – like Hungary, Slovakia, and Bulgaria – and will strive for peace rather than inciting war!

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Honouring Stalin in Moscow

by New Worker
correspondent

Despite the usual freezing temperatures, hundreds of Muscovites gathered on Saturday 21st December in Red Square to commemorate the 145th anniversary of the birth of Joseph Stalin. Russian communist leader Gennady Zyuganov laid flowers on Stalin's grave while hundreds of other communists, waving Soviet flags and holding portraits of Stalin, followed to pay tribute to the Soviet leader's grave at the Kremlin wall by Lenin's Mausoleum in the Russian capital. Similar events took place in other Russian cities



as well, including St Petersburg, the former Czarist capital that was called Leningrad in Soviet days.

Despite the ceaseless anti-communist, anti-Soviet propaganda of the decades that have followed the counter-revolution that destroyed the USSR in 1991, Joseph Stalin continues to be a popular and revered figure amongst the Russian people and especially for the working class. Numerous surveys conducted over the past few years confirm the popularity of Stalin among Russians and the recognition of his crucial role in leading the Soviet Union to victory over the Nazi Third Reich during the Second World War.

Canada: Trudeau quits!

by Dave McKee

So, three weeks after the abrupt resignation of his Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland, and amid a growing chorus of Liberal MPs and regional party caucuses calling for him to move aside, Justin Trudeau announced on 6th January that he will step down as Liberal Party leader.

Through their (current) favourite mouthpiece, Pierre Poilievre, corporate profiteers used the announcement as an opportunity to press for an immediate election – one which polls consistently suggest would be handily won by the Conservatives. This aligns nicely with the designs of much of the business community in Canada,

who have been opportunistically pressing for an all-party united front to respond to Donald Trump's tariff threat. These private monopoly corporations are hoping to consolidate and extend their power by integrating with Trump's anti-social, anti-democratic, anti-union and warmongering policies.

Sensing however, that his party will be trounced, Trudeau prorogued Parliament until 24th March, rather than resuming on 27th January. During that time, the Liberals will presumably select a replacement for Trudeau. Upon returning in March, we can expect the opposition parties to table a non-confidence motion and trigger a federal election.

Trudeau and the Liberal Party brass are hoping that the additional

two-month break will buy them enough time to steady their floundering ship and allow them a fighting chance at the ballot box. Part of this 'reset' will no doubt involve aligning their policies with the priorities of monopoly corporations, to undercut some of Poilievre's popularity while committing to the same pro-austerity, pro-privatisation agenda.

Prorogation, however, also provides working people, and specifically the labour movement, with an opportunity. It offers a nearly three-month window in which the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC), its provincial federations and affiliated unions, together with unions outside the CLC and the labour centrals in Quebec, can press hard for a political

agenda that clearly puts working-class need ahead of corporate profiteering. In the process, the labour movement could set the tone for the next federal election – which we all know is coming very soon – and mobilise millions of working people into the political struggle.

Imagine the effect of a sustained all-labour campaign to highlight the need for government action to reduce prices on necessities such as food, housing and fuel, and to increase incomes for working people including unemployed workers and retirees. What about a cross-country mobilisation for full employment, given that two million people are still out of work and that full-time jobs are diminishing and being replaced by part-time employment? Or what of a coast-to-coast

to-coast call for real action on the housing crisis, complete with rent rollbacks, rent control, a tenants' bill of rights, and a massive construction campaign to build millions of badly needed units of truly affordable publicly owned and publicly provided housing?

This is when we need labour to spark a real discussion about the need for strong and expanding social programs such as health, education, childcare, and climate and environmental clean-up and protection. Now is the time for the union movement to call for an end to the government's plans, supported by all parties in Parliament, to jack military spending by more than 100 per cent to \$80 billion in less than a decade, and

in the process drain the public coffers of any capacity to protect and expand social programmes and infrastructure.

It's a big call, sure – but working people need the labour movement to move into and lead this kind of action, based on working-class politics and class struggle unionism.

If it doesn't happen, the next three months are sure to be dominated by political discourse that sells an agenda based on austerity, militarism, privatisation and growing inequality. And the election that comes out the other end of that discourse will have little on offer but more of the same, with labour and the working class left further behind.

*People's Voice
(Canada)*