

Israel: now the blame game begins

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

An uneasy calm hovers over Gaza. Hamas police and resistance fighters are back on the streets as Palestinians return to the rubble that once was their homes. The ceasefire agreement came into effect on Sunday, enabling the release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners by Israel in exchange for 33 Israeli prisoners held by Hamas.

Humanitarian aid is now surging back into the beleaguered Gaza Strip. More than 630 trucks entered the Strip on the first day of the truce – the highest number since the conflict began in October 2023. Fuel supplies are also on their way as part of the agreement between the resistance and the Israelis. For the first 10 days of the truce Iraq will send 10 million litres of fuel to Gaza, and Qatar a further 1.25 million, to help restore civil life in the Palestinian enclave that defied the might of the Israeli army for 15 months.

The end of the fighting was welcomed by the Communist Party of Israel (CPI) and the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash). “From day one, we called for



• Red Cross officials liaising with Hamas militiamen in Gaza.

an agreement that would bring everyone home – prisoners, abductees, detainees and hostages, Israelis and Palestinians alike. Such an agreement was possible and could have saved the lives of tens of thousands of Palestinians and hundreds of Israelis. We are not satisfied with just the agreement reached and will continue to fight for progress toward a serious negotiation that will lead to the end of the occupation and the siege, and lead to a just and comprehensive peace, based on recognising the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the establishment of its independent state alongside the State of Israel,” they said.

On the West Bank the Palestinian People’s Party (PPP) signalled support for the agreement, expressing hope that it will put an end to the “ongoing daily killing and genocide against our people”. The PPP said this moment requires the unity of all the

various forces and factions in Palestinian society to ensure the agreement is implemented and to prevent Israel’s “evasion and block its persistence in aborting the aspirations of our people”.

Unifying Palestinians within the framework of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) is essential to resist Israel’s still-existing plans for “colonial displacement and annexation”. The fight to bring war criminals to justice is also just beginning, the PPP declared, along with the struggle to guarantee Palestinian refugees’ right to return and the establishment of a single Palestinian government.

But the deal has triggered a crisis in the Netanyahu government that grudgingly accepted the terms after a last-minute intervention by Donald Trump in Washington. The head of the armed forces has resigned and one of the rabid Zionist settler parties has left the Netanyahu coalition.

phe”. Itamar Ben-Gvir, the leader of the Jewish Power bloc in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, resigned when the truce went into effect on Sunday, taking the rest of his seven-strong bloc with him. The Netanyahu coalition is now left with just 62 seats in the 120-strong Knesset.

General Herzi Halevi fell on his sword for other reasons. The Chief of the Israeli General Staff says he was resigning over his army’s “failure” to prevent the surprise attack by the Palestinian resistance on southern Israel on 7th October 2023 – although others suspect that failing to crush the resistance is the real reason for his departure. General Jaron Finkelman, the chief of Israel’s Southern Command, has also stepped down. But many Israelis believe the person ultimately responsible for the debacle is Netanyahu himself...

FUND

This week’s postbag contained £628 including £200 from a Dagenham comrade and £40 from another. The fighting fund now stands at £1,063. We now need £2,437 to hit our target for the month and we’ve haven’t got long to get it.

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Defend the right to protest

Scores of protesters were arrested in London last weekend in what many fear is the beginning of a new crackdown on demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian people. The arrest of the Chief Steward as well as the Director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the cautioning of Jeremy Corbyn, the former Labour leader who now heads the Independent Alliance in Parliament, was an outrageous attack on democracy and the right to free speech.

More than 40 legal scholars are now calling for an independent inquiry into the Metropolitan Police's handling of the pro-Palestine protest, describing the force's actions as "a disproportionate, unwarranted and dangerous assault on the right to assembly and protest".

They certainly are.

Reverting to form

Some fear that the Met is reverting to form now that the fighting has, at least for the time being, stopped in Gaza. Others believe that the crackdown orders came right from the top, from a disorientated Starmer government whose slavish support for Israeli aggression has been undermined by the pragmatic decision of the new Trump administration to end the war.

The Zionists are already looking for a pretext to scupper the cease-fire agreement once all their prisoners have been released. And in the occupied West Bank the Israelis are brutally oppressing the Palestinians as they step up the expansion of Zionist settlements on stolen Arab land.

Donald Trump may want to appease the Saudis but few seriously believe he's going to make any real effort to recognise the legitimate demands of the Palestinian Arabs. His last intervention – the "deal of the century" during his first term of office – was merely a smokescreen to formally endorse the collaboration of a few feudal Arab leaders with Israel. Although this round of fighting is over the next is already on the horizon.

Back in Washington...

...a row is brewing over Lord Mandelson, Starmer's chosen man to replace the outgoing British ambassador to the USA. But according to an anonymous source in the *Independent*: "There is also a sense of betrayal felt by Mr Trump and his team after they hosted Sir Keir and foreign secretary David Lammy for dinner and this is also playing into the potential decision on Lord Mandelson. Starmer, Lammy and Trump sat down for that dinner," the source explained. "They make a lot about Lammy being given a second helping by Trump but all that does not matter because Labour then sent out activists to help Kamala Harris. Starmer had a terrible briefing saying Harris would win and his actions after undid any goodwill he may have had."

Elon Musk tells Reform to dump Farage while calling for Starmer's removal. Trump tells Starmer who his next ambassador should be. Being grateful for a second helping of chicken...this is what crawling to the Americans leads to...

Biden attempts to white-wash his disgraced legacy

by Hugo East

The administration of President Joseph R Biden in its waning days had the lowest approval rating of any outgoing president since Jimmy Carter. The US-Israeli genocide in Gaza and several other disastrous policies put a stain on the legacy of the outgoing administration that it dearly hopes to whitewash for the sake of posterity and perhaps ego.

As Biden's term comes to an end, he has attempted to accomplish this rehabilitation as so many bourgeois politicians have before him: by staging attention-grabbing political stunts that contradict the conservative and genocidal policy priorities his administration demonstrated throughout his one and only term.

Between the launching of a deadly NATO war in Ukraine, the escalation of the US-enabled genocide in Palestine, historic economic inflation, the increasing impoverishment of the working class and the failed 2024 presidential campaign that he was forced to end, followed by the decisive loss to Donald Trump of his anointed successor, Kamala Harris, there is much to rehabilitate. The Democratic Party has shown it's an imperialist pro-war party and is unresponsive to the needs of the multinational working class right here.

Taking credit for a ceasefire that Biden never wanted

After 470 days of Israel's genocide of the Palestinian people, a ceasefire began on 19th January, the last full day of the Biden term. Although the outgoing president said in a 15th January statement that the ceasefire is a result of "dogged and painstaking American diplomacy" and that his administration "never ceased in their efforts to get this done" that is a lie. That victory was due to the steadfastness of the Pales-

tinian resistance and their allies, who had worldwide support.

The Biden administration never had that political will. Their attempt now to take credit for a ceasefire they have ardently opposed is crass political cover for a legacy disgraced by its perpetration of genocide.

An empty gesture for the Cuban people

Biden removed Cuba from the list of state sponsors of terrorism on 14th January in an executive act that was rescinded upon Trump's inauguration. Trump, after all, at the start of his first term, reversed President Barack Obama's attempts to normalise relations with Cuba, and Trump's attitude toward Cuba has not changed.

A 2015 Chicago Council poll found that 67 per cent of Americans supported the USA ending the trade embargo with Cuba. The UN General Assembly voted again in October 2024 to end the blockade, 187 in favour, two against (Israel and the USA). By appearing to support the overwhelmingly popular cause of the Cuban people at a time when there will be no political consequences, Biden hopes to soften his indelible image as an enthusiastic caretaker of US imperialism.

A hollow apology to Indigenous victims of genocide

Two weeks before the election, in October 2024, President Biden formally apologised for the federal government's role in running boarding schools in the USA where thousands of Indigenous children endured abuse, neglect and eradication of their tribal identities, calling it "a blot on

American history".

This apology does nothing to assuage the devastation and genocide of Indigenous people, in light of the USA's continued pursuit of substantially similar policies in its colonies, against other people of colour and incarcerated people in the USA and against migrants (to name but a few).

A concrete step Biden should have taken as soon as he took office, and one with real meaning, would have been to pardon ailing Indigenous 80-year-old political prisoner Leonard Peltier. Instead Biden waited until his last day in office to commute Peltier's sentence to compassionate release, forcing him to now live under home confinement.

Honouring the victims of US oppression

On 2nd January Biden awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal to 20 US citizens who "have performed exemplary deeds of service for their country or their fellow citizens". Among the awardees was Mitsuye Endo Tsutsumi, who was incarcerated in a US concentration camp for Japanese-Americans during the Second World War. She filed a habeas corpus petition to the Supreme Court that led to the release of thousands of her fellow detainees as well as herself.

The award is another example of an attempt to sanitise the legacy of the USA's attitude of contempt toward oppressed and marginalised populations. Official US domestic and foreign policy has always been to oppress whoever suits US actors as much as possible within the bounds of 'respectable' liberal politics and only to relent when those who resist this oppression force its hand. Tsutsumi was one such resister, and Joe Biden redoubled US hypocrisy by honouring her while the government continues to treat others in her position the same way it treated her.

Workers World (USA)

Workers' Notes

On the shelves

by New Worker correspondent

Although this is the time of year when thoughts turn to diets, industrial action in the food industry is taking place. The mountains of Austria have become the unexpected backdrop to an ongoing industrial dispute in Lincolnshire. The dispute in question is that being presently undertaken by hundreds of Unite members at the Bakkavor food factory in Spalding, Lincolnshire. Strike action has been going on since September because real wages have decreased by 10.6 per cent over the last three years. The factory produces soup, salads and dips for major UK supermarkets, including Tesco, M&S and Sainsbury's.

Unite are now heading off to the Austrian alps – to KitzSki in Kitzbuhel during a ski festival – to draw attention to the connection between the dispute and the owner of the resort (32 per cent owned by LongRange Capital, which is also a significant shareholder in Bakkavor). The town's mayor, Dr Winkler, is also a KitzSki shareholder.

General Secretary Sharon Graham pointed out that: "Bakkavor is an incredibly profitable company and has paid out millions to LongRange Capital and its other shareholders. This is a company that is fully able to provide its workers with a fair pay rise but is cynically choosing not to.

"LongRange Capital needs to ensure that Bakkavor's management gets round the negotiating table with a decent pay offer for our members. Until that happens there will be no hiding place for the company nor its stakeholders."

To be precise, Bakkavor made £94 million profit last year and paid out £158 million to shareholders over the last five years. Despite this, most workers at the Spalding factory earn only 10 pence per hour above the UK minimum wage.

Standing together for the unemployed

by New Worker correspondent

Kilburn Unemployed Workers Group (KUWG) campaigners picketed the Harlesden job-centre last week to give out leaflets to claimants about the help KUWG can provide. The Group focuses primarily on combating benefits injustices through advocacy in individuals' benefit claims, and on demonstrations that emphasise that there is hope when we come together.

The KUWG recognises that the struggle of the employed and the unemployed is one and the same, but it also affirms that smear stories and marginalisation add to the isolation experienced



by the unwaged. The campaign was started by Tom Mellish, a

TUC official, some 15 years ago in collaboration with the Willes-

den Trades Council and it has been going ever since.

This protest follows similar actions conducted by Unite in Iceland last year, which also targeted major shareholders in Bakkavor. While we cannot object to creative forms of protests we cannot help but wonder if sending organisers to lobby shareholders and well-heeled tourists is the best use of union resources. It is notable that the earlier action in Iceland did not bring any rewards, but at least union officials will get an agreeable few days away.

This is not the only industrial dispute in the food industry. At Bidfood, one of the UK's leading distributors supplying 40,000 hotels, restaurants, pubs, prisons, care homes, hospitals, schools and universities from 26 depots, is threatening its workers with a 'P&O style' fire-and-rehire threat.

GMB and Unite have been recognised for over 30 years but last week Management ripped it up with immediate effect, without the standard notice period.

Nadine Houghton, GMB National Officer, said: "GMB, Unite and Bidfood have successfully worked together to improve workers' pay, terms and conditions since at least the 1990s. Our members work hard delivering vital food supplies for the army, prisons and schools across the UK. Without us, bosses will be

able to do what they want, ripping up their contracts and enforcing worse terms and conditions."

She also warned that: "Bidfood faces becoming P&O on the road and GMB members won't stand for it. All options are open, including an industrial action vote."

Unite say industrial action is likely unless the company reverses its decision to tear up long-standing recognition agreements and de-recognise unions.

Sharon Graham said: "Bidfood is guilty of union busting pure and simple and Unite will not tolerate such behaviour at any level. Unite's focus is always on defending its members and Bidfood needs to reverse its perverse decision or face the inevitable consequences."

This looks like the start of an attack on workers' pay and conditions. Most of Unite's members are based at the company's Battersea, Birmingham, Plymouth and Salisbury depots.

The union's national officer for the sector, Adrian Jones, added: "Bidfood's actions are disgraceful and Unite is considering all options about how to respond including industrial action...the company's clients will be alarmed they could be facing a spring of cancelled deliveries due

to industrial action and should be demanding to know exactly what Bidfood is playing at."

Further along the food supply chain, shopworkers' union USDAW welcomed the fact that Sainsbury's (which includes Argos) is raising staff pay to £12.45 per hour in March and £12.60 in August, with London staff seeing their pay rise to £13.70 and £13.85. This supposed act of generosity briefly made Sainsbury's the biggest supermarket to pay staff the new Real Living Wage nationally and the London Living Wage rates.

National Officer Bally Auluk commented: "The working relationship between USDAW and Sainsbury's continues to strengthen, and we are pleased that the company has again worked closely with our Union's representatives during the recent pay consideration meeting. The business has decided to make a pay award totalling five per cent, despite lower inflation rates than last year and following on from previous significant pay increases."

Paddy Lillis, the USDAW general secretary, added: "USDAW has a longstanding and valued relationship with Sainsbury's and we welcome the staff pay increase in line with new Real

Living Wage rates. Our members are key workers in the business and it is only right they are fairly rewarded with a living wage."

Simon Roberts, CEO of Sainsbury's, declared that: "Our people are fundamental to achieving our Next Level Sainsbury's plan and we are pleased to announce that we will increase pay for our hourly-paid colleagues by five per cent in the year ahead... split into two steps to help manage a particularly tough cost-inflation environment. We believe in rewarding our colleagues well for delivering leading service and productivity and we will be the best-paying UK grocer from March." He can well afford to sound generous. His own pay was £4.9 million last time round while the company made a £966 million profit.

On Tuesday, Sainsbury's were outflanked by Aldi raising their hourly rates to £12.71 and £14.00 within the M25. Such unbounded riches.

High Tech Wage Slavery

The problems of fast-food

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delivery workers have often featured on these pages. In addition to the normal ones of low and irregular pay and dodgy self-employment, they face strange and unaccountable algorithms on the mobile phones that control their working lives.

It is a mystery to the delivery drivers employed by Uber Eats, Just Eat and Deliveroo as to why someone who has only just logged on gets a job while others who have been waiting longer get passed over. Sometimes when a restaurant is busy and demanding couriers, drivers waiting outside are informed that there are none available.

More seriously the app also makes unexpected reductions in payments due. One angry driver was quoted by the *Guardian* newspaper as saying that he “is regularly frustrated by having to challenge what appeared to be shortfall in pay per job” – sometimes just 10p, but at other times a few pounds, adding that: “There’s nobody you can talk to. Everything is automated.”

Sometimes apps disappear or suddenly stop working with no explanations, leaving drivers without any chance of income from that source. Another driver reported promised fees going up and down on their way to a job, usually in a downwards direction. “Every worker should understand the basis on which they are paid,” the driver not unreasonably said.

“But you’re being gamed into deciding whether to accept a job or not. Will I get a better offer? It’s like gambling and it’s very distressing and stressful for people.”

GMB, which secured a controversial recognition agreement with Deliveroo three years ago, demands transparency in the algorithms behind pay at food delivery and riding companies.

On Monday a coalition involving unions, Amnesty International and Privacy International started a campaign to uncover the process on how pay and job access decisions are made.

GMB full-time officer Eamon O’Hearn said this seemingly technical issue is a “massive issue across the entire platform economy.”

“How much members are paid is a crucial building block of negotiation between workers and bosses. GMB needs to know how and when members are paid if we’re going to be effective in raising their earnings and addressing inequality. Our members want greater transparency in how their earnings are calculated, particularly in terms of ‘dynamic pricing,’ as our members seek to keep pace with the rise in cost of living.”

Food delivery is a huge business. The big three, UberEATS, Deliveroo and JustEat, have a combined UK turnover of nearly £9 billion. Some 88,000 couriers deliver around 4.7 million meals for UberEATS alone.

The small App Drivers &

Couriers Union and the Worker Info Exchange are demanding that these companies need to provide accurate information.

“Too often workers are left in the dark about the reasons why they have been fired, underpaid, or that they’ve been discriminated against as more and more decisions impacting them are made by algorithms,” the union claims.

In the early days of capitalism mill owners would often slow down clocks to extend the working day. Hi-tech in the bosses’ hands has ensured a return to those days.

The Civil Service and Beyond

by New Worker correspondent

At first glance the news that 300 civilian staff at the Metropolitan Police are taking full strike action for two weeks in the first half of February might be good news for burglars. But in reality the strike, called by PCS, is taking place over the question of working from home in a department that has little to do with crime fighting.

Earlier, PCS members voted to take action short of a strike in the shape of non-compliance with the new attendance policy on which the dispute is based. In

response, Management threatened to deduct a full day’s pay for any day on which a member of staff worked from home when they had been instructed to attend the office.

PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote says: “This hard-line approach by Met Police managers has been completely counter-productive, effectively escalating the dispute. Our members take their jobs very seriously and didn’t want to disrupt the important work they do, but now they feel their hands have been forced because if they’ll lose pay when they’re not striking, they felt they might as well lose pay for striking.”

“Instead of pouring fuel on the fire by punishing our members for exercising their democratic right to take industrial action, managers should talk to us and try to resolve the issue.”

It is expected that the strike will affect backroom functions of the police force, specifically updating the National Crime Database and clearing people through vetting.

The same union is also involved in a number of other battles. That of widest interest is continuing the battle to restore national Civil Service-wide bargaining instead of the divisive negotiations with individual departments that was introduced in the Thatcher years and are very time consuming for all concerned. Starmer shows no sign of changing this.

PCS says: “It is not right that workers in the Civil Service do broadly the same job at broadly the same grade but are paid wildly different rates depending on which department they work in. Sectoral collective bargaining at national level is the way to remedy this.”

One modest improvement from Starmer is that the Cabinet Office has said they are open to reviewing guidance on facility time, which will lift the severe restrictions on the time allowed for union reps to do their job.

As might be expected however, progress under the Starmer regime “had proved disappointing to date and that significant progress was unlikely without a serious fight”.

Across the Civil Service there are several disputes over attempts to bring outsourced cleaners and caterers employed by ISS, OCS and G4S either back in-house or at least bring them up to the same level of pay and conditions as directly employed workers. In a similar dispute, PCS members at Fujitsu Services are also in dispute over pay and have voted for strike action by 87 per cent.

A battle at the Civilian Aviation Authority over a below inflation pay offer is likely after workers belonging to both PCS and Prospect balloted for action. Workers at the Marine Management Organisation and Home Office immigration staff at Heathrow airport are balloting for action in defence of jobs.

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

21st January 2005

THE BRITISH public were shocked and stunned last Wednesday as photos of British soldiers abusing Iraqi civilians were splashed across newspaper front pages.

The photos, 22 in all, are part of the evidence being presented at the court martial of three of the British soldiers involved. They show appalling violence, intimidation and humiliation forced on a number of Iraqis, who are naked or nearly naked, some of them bound in rope nets.

The events depicted in the photos are reported to have happened at a storage base near the Iraqi town of Basra in the weeks after the illegal American and British invasion of Iraq. The court martial is taking place at the British army base at Osnabruck in Germany.

The soldiers, of the First Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, claim they were “only obeying orders”. They say the Iraqis were looters, stealing food meant for humanitarian aid and that they had been told to “work them hard”.

It does not seem to have occurred to them or their officers that there is a staggering irony in their moral condemnation of these no doubt hungry men for stealing food, when they had just taken part in the violent theft of a whole country – an invasion that destroyed Iraq’s infrastructure and food supplies and did not trouble itself to restore them quickly.

General Sir Michael Jackson, the head of the Army, said that 65,000 servicemen and women had served in Iraq

since the invasion.

“Only a very small number are alleged to be involved in incidents of this type, and in consequence the number of open investigations into deliberate abuse against Iraqi citizens is very small,” he said.

Tony Blair described the pictures as “shocking and appalling” but said they should not be allowed to “tarnish the good name of our armed forces”. He added that the “vast majority” of soldiers who served in Iraq had done so “with courage and honour”.

In this way those responsible for putting these men in this situation wash their hands of responsibility.

Just last week an American soldier was jailed for 10 years for his part in the abuse that took place at Abu Ghraib. In the same way, the US government is trying to portray the scandal at Abu Ghraib as the work of a few rotten ordinary soldiers rather than the inevitable outcome of a brutal invasion.

The pillars of the post-war world are crumbling

by David Cavendish

The Second World War ended 80 years ago in 1945. The war lasted six years, from 1939 to 1945, although some would argue that it really began in 1937 with the Japanese invasion of China. No one would argue, however, that the war was the deadliest in history.

Tens of millions of people died (estimates as to the number of military and civilian fatalities vary widely), of whom six million were Jews killed in the Holocaust. There was destruction of vast territories in Europe and Asia, with the Soviet Union suffering the greatest losses: around 27 million people died and over 7,000 villages and cities destroyed. And in Japan over 200,000 people – mostly civilians – died in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

By contrast, other than the attack on Pearl Harbor (a military base), the USA suffered virtually no physical damage, fewer than 500,000 military deaths, and only several thousand civilian casualties, mainly of American citizens living abroad.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the USA emerged from the conflict as the strongest political, military and economic power on Earth.

In a world where almost all of the major world players suffered immense damage, the USA saw an opportunity to decisively mould the post-war world to its advantage and used its position to shape the creation of several important institutions and the development of significant policies.

This power was no more evident than in the establishment of the United Nations. Carrying forward the ideals of the failed League of Nations (which the USA never joined), the five major victors



• Pillars of the old Non-Aligned Movement: Nehru, Nkrumah, Nasser, Sukarno and Tito.

in the war were instrumental in creating an organisation that was dedicated, in the words of the UN Charter: “To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace...”

The reality, however, saw the UN’s emergence as an important arena of the Cold War. The five permanent members of the Security Council – the USA, the Soviet Union, the UK, France and China – held the power of the veto. That is, any one of the five had the right to overrule any decision made by a majority of the Council by casting a “No”

vote. The Soviet Union, the only major socialist power on the Security Council at the time, had to thwart repeated manoeuvres by the USA and cast 79 vetoes in the first 10 years.

US dominance extended to the economic sphere with the creation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At the same time, the US dollar became the medium of exchange in international currency transactions.

Three years after the end of hostilities, President Harry S Truman signed the Economic Recovery Act of 1948, better known as the Marshall Plan. The main thrust of the programme was to rebuild the war-torn European capitalist countries, ostensibly, in the words of the National Archives, to support “the development of stable democratic governments in Western Europe”.

Implicit in the implementation of the Marshall Plan,

however, was the creation of a bulwark to prevent what the US government saw as the “spread of communism”. Over the next four years, the USA provided over \$13 billion to its western allies; the Soviet Union and the developing socialist economies of Eastern Europe received not one cent.

In Asia, Japan and south Korea both received substantial economic aid, as well as the stationing of thousands of US troops on their soil. Both countries were seen as major defences against “communist expansion”.

But in the larger world picture, Japan and south Korea were merely two pieces in Washington’s broader international anti-communist strategy. By 1947, the USA actively pursued a policy known as “containment”, which was dedicated to minimising Soviet influence in the world arena – ultimately with the aim of overthrowing the world’s first socialist state.

The main instrument of

“containment” was the establishment of several military alliances, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) foremost among them. Formed in 1949 by 12 countries in Europe and North America, the alliance was dedicated to, in the words of the Office of the Historian at the State Department, providing “collective security against the Soviet Union”.

Many would argue, however, that such a view was nothing more than an excuse to pursue a military response to a non-existent threat. The USSR had no plans to invade Western Europe; instead it consistently pursued a policy of peace and peaceful co-existence with the West.

Yet the USA and its allies were only part of a much bigger world. At the same time the Cold War was unfolding, so too were the national liberation and freedom movements among the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America. In the quarter-century after the end of the Second World War, nearly 50 countries attained their political independence.

Yet, despite the achievement of political independence, the major imperialist countries, led by the USA, maintained economic domination of international trade and finance. Through the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization (WTO), living standards in the developing countries stagnated and they accumulated huge amounts of debt.

Although burdened by an unfair economic system, the countries of what was then called the Third World and now known as the Global South fought back. Through organisations such as the Non-Aligned Movement, the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Group of 77, the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin

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America demanded a more democratic and egalitarian economic world order.

That struggle continues and has intensified today. A number of developing countries, led by the People's Republic of China, but including India, Brazil and South Africa, among many others, are using their growing economic power and political importance to demand reform of the post-Second World War world order.

There is no lack of calls for reform of the major pillars that underpin US dominance in the economic, political

and military fields. The leaders of several developing countries have been outspoken on these subjects.

S Jaishankar, the foreign minister of India, at the UN General Assembly in 2022, called for reform, saying "the current architecture is anachronistic and ineffective" and "deeply unfair, denying entire continents and regions a voice in a forum that deliberates their future".

Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, the president of Brazil and current president of the G20, recently outlined his views on the governance of major world institutions. In the words of two writers for

the Associated Press, Lula pointed to organisations "such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and multi-lateral banks" as places where there should be "stronger representation of developing nations".

He sees a UN Security Council in need of "more countries from Africa, Latin America, as well as India, Germany, or Japan". Lula also added: "We need to add more people and end the right of veto in the UN, because it is not possible for one country alone to be able to veto the approval of something approved by all members."

The most comprehensive programme for

reform of the international order has come from Xi Jinping, president of the People's Republic of China. He has formulated his views in three broad initiatives: the Global Security Initiative (GSI), the Global Development Initiative (GDI) and the Global Civilisation Initiative (GCI).

At the G20 summit held in Rio de Janeiro in November 2024, Xi outlined China's views on reforming global governance. He said: "We should keep in mind that mankind lives in a community with a shared future, see each other's development as opportunities rather than chal-

lenges, and view each other as partners rather than rivals."

He called for adherence to a system of international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and defended an order based on international law. To do so, he said it's necessary to "promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation".

Xi went on to outline some key principles to achieve it, including co-operation in economic governance, stable international financial systems, open trade, working together to fos-

ter digital innovation, and "eco-friendliness".

It is critical that the people of Earth unite around new ideas based on the world of the 21st Century. China and other countries are doing some of the heavy lifting; we don't have to re-invent the wheel. For those of us in the USA, it is our responsibility, indeed our duty, to work toward replacing the unequal world order created by the USA and its allies at the end of the Second World War and build one that reflects the hopes and dreams of all the eight billion people who live on our planet today.

People's World (USA)

The Troubled Reality of Brazil

by Dermot Hudson

In December 2024 I paid my fourth visit to Brazil. Brazil is often portrayed as a glamorous paradise with bright sunshine, beautiful beaches, majestic scenery and constant partying. This image however, hides the troubled realities of Brazil – a country with a complex history that included one or possibly two periods of fascist rule (the initial period of the rule of Getulio Vargas and the Brazilian military dictatorship 1964–1985) and which still has much poverty and infrastructure problems (passenger railways are rare in Brazil). Brazil also has a significant communist and leftist movement but sadly it is very fragmented and deeply split. Brazilian social democracy itself is not represented by sim-

ply one party but by several: the Workers Party of President Lula (PT), the Democratic Labour Party (PDT), the Brazilian Socialist Party (PSB40), the Social Democratic Party (PSDB) and also the semi-Trotskyite Party of Socialism and Liberty.

The glamorous image of Brazil is belied by scores of favela slums in cities such as São Paulo and Rio De Janeiro. It was pointed out to me that a favela on a mountainside was visible from the beach at Copacabana in Rio De Janeiro. Since my last visit three years ago the far-right government of Bolsonaro has been replaced by a PT-led coalition led by the veteran Lula himself, a former trade unionist and metal worker. The government is a coalition consisting of the PT, the PSB, the communist PCdoB and the Greens. Lula's coalition had won a narrow vic-

tory over Bolsonaro in October 2022 but in January 2023, when Lula was due to be sworn in as President, the Bolsonaroistas attempted a coup. On the 8th January 2023, hordes of Bolsonaro supporters tried to storm the Brazilian Congress and Supreme Court. In some parts of

the country roads were blocked and buses were set on fire. The Bolsonaroistas hoped to get support from the armed forces but the armed troops either stood to one side or supported Lula. The Bolsonaroistas riot evoked the precedent of Trump's supporters trying to storm the

White House. It also had a much deeper significance than that. The Bolsonaroistas hoped that the military would support them and stage a coup in their support, a repeat of the 1964 military coup against the reformist Goulart government. Bolsonaro himself had broken the post military dictatorship consensus by openly praising the Brazilian military fascist regime of the 1960s and '70s, something that was for a long time regarded as a 'No No' by Brazilian politicians of all hues.

The present PT-led coalition government is the third Lula government and the fourth PT-led government in Brazil. On this visit to Brazil, I did not witness starving people begging to bought food but I was told that this was still going on with some people pleading with shoppers to buy something for them. I also noticed homeless people living under motorway bridges.

The favelas still exist and are very much present in the big cities. In São Paulo there is a right wing municipal administration that is trying to purge the homeless from the centre of São Paulo, and bus and metro fares have been increased. Prices have gone up a lot since 2021, for example 500g of coffee now costs 26 Brazilian reals but in 2021 it was 18 reals and 10 reals a few years before that. Brazil is faced with a currency declining in value and budgetary deficit problems.

Internationally, Lula has not supported the US-led imperialist condemnation of Russia but he has opposed Venezuela's accession to the BRICS bloc. Lula has taken an anti-Venezuela line and the Brazilian media is saturated with anti-Venezuela, anti-Maduro propaganda.

Arguably despite several periods of administration lasting about 16 years, Lula and



• President Lula of Brazil

the PT have achieved little, and less than the ‘pink-brown’ reformist regime of Getúlio Vargas (who nationalised industries and created the giant Petrobras petroleum corporation) and the reformist regime of Joao Goulart. There is much disillusionment

among PT voters and supporters. I was told that because Lula is “so useless”, the Bolsonaristas will be back at the next election. In Brazil as in many European countries the Left’s espousal of trendy identity politics and liberalism have switched off work-

ing-class voters and built up a barrier between the Left and the working class, leading to workers turning to the right and far-right.

Brazil is a country that has many supporters of People’s Korea despite hostile media propaganda against the

DPRK as well as the influence of the south Korean puppets in Brazil through K-pop music and garbage soap operas. In Brazil supporters of People’s Korea are organised in the Korean Friendship Association (KFA) of Brazil, part of the worldwide Korean

Friendship Association as well as the Brazilian Centre for the Study of Songun Politics (CEPS-BR) and the Brazilian Centre for the Study of the Juche Idea. I was able to meet the head of the KFA Brazil in Rio De Janeiro and a representative of CEPS-

BR in São Paulo. Both organisations said that they were gaining new members and expanding their work.

All in all it was an interesting trip to Brazil. Brazil faces a difficult road ahead and it is not clear what direction Brazil will take in the future.

China and Vietnam: a steady partnership in uncertain times

The 18th January marked 75 years of diplomatic relations between China and Vietnam. In a world where geopolitical shifts and challenges seem commonplace, both countries seized this milestone as an opportunity to reflect on their unique partnership, which has become a rare source of stability in an increasingly unpredictable world.

Why has the China-Vietnam relationship provided a sense of certainty amid such uncertain geopolitical changes?

The relationship between China and Vietnam is not just a recent development. It has deep roots, built on a long history of friendship, shared struggles, and a common path of socialist development.

This bond, often described as “comrades-plus-brothers”, isn’t just a slogan, it reflects a deep political and emotional connection that has shaped their relationship for decades. This partnership has grown even more substantial. Both nations and their parties have learned from each other and worked together to



pursue a shared vision for the future. This vision, rooted in the desire to build a better life for their people and create a stable, prosperous region, inspires hope for a brighter tomorrow.

As socialist countries with similar political systems and development goals, China and Vietnam have much in common. Their leaders meet regularly to discuss how to move forward together, and they have agreed on key initiatives

such as the “China-Vietnam community with a shared future”.

This isn’t just a catch-phrase, it’s a plan to deepen co-operation across politics, economics, culture and society. The “China-Vietnam community with a shared future” is a comprehensive initiative that aims to foster mutual understanding, respect and support, building a future where both countries can thrive despite global uncertainties.

Economically, the relationship between China and Vietnam stands out as an example of how two countries can complement each other. China is Vietnam’s biggest trading partner, and Vietnam has become China’s largest trading partner within ASEAN. This economic partnership has become even more critical as the USA pushes for “decoupling” and tries to shift global supply chains away from China.

Despite global uncertainties and the USA’s push for “decoupling” the trade and economic ties between China and Vietnam have not weakened. Instead, they have grown stronger, demonstrating the resilience of regional co-operation and instilling confidence in the stability of the region’s economy.

The partnership also extends beyond economics. Both countries are part of the Regional Comprehensive Eco-

nomic Partnership, a significant free trade agreement in the world. By working together within this framework, China and Vietnam are helping to strengthen regional economic integration. Their co-operation not only benefits their own economies but also boosts East Asia’s competitiveness on the global stage.

At its core, the relationship between China and Vietnam is about more than politics or economics. It’s about building a future where both nations – and the region as a whole – can thrive.

In a time when the world often feels divided and uncertain, their partnership reminds us of what can be achieved through co-operation and shared goals.

As they look ahead, China and Vietnam are committed to maintaining their strong ties and using their partnership to contribute to a more stable and interconnected Asia-Pacific. This relationship benefits their people and offers a model for how countries can work together in a changing world.

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

I was informed today by his son, Graham, that Ken Capstick whilst on holiday in Bulgaria with his daughter, Julie, was taken ill and following an emergency operation sadly passed away.

I know there will be many messages and expressions of sorrow and shock at the loss of an outstanding trade unionist and Socialist, who continued to fight to the very end of his life for workers' rights and Socialism.

During the railway workers' strikes of a couple of years ago, Ken and I stood side by side on RMT and ASLEF picket lines. To mark the 40th and 50th anniversaries of the Battle of Saltley Gate, 1972 – in which Ken fought on the picket lines – we spoke together. Only last year, we shared a platform at the major rallies marking the 40th anniversary of the Miners' Strike of 1984/1985.

Ken was a former Vice-President of the National Union of Mineworkers Yorkshire Area. He was a leading member and official in the Socialist Labour Party, and since 2017 a Trustee of the Mineworkers' Pension Scheme. To every task or role he took on he brought unswerving commitment together with an extraordinary range of skills.

Ken and I were comrades and personal friends for over 50 years. No words can express the sense of loss I feel. However, his death is a massive loss to the labour and trade union

movement of a man who fought from a young age for trade union rights and a socialist system of society.

I extend my deepest sympathy to Ken's much-loved children, David, Julie and Graham and his grand-children who were his pride and joy.

**Arthur Scargill
President, National Union of Mineworkers 1982–2002
Leader, Socialist Labour Party 1996–2024**

Dear Comrades

Every time I see or hear of the almost daily slaughter of the defenceless citizens of Gaza by the Israeli armed forces and the total lack of interest in their fate by our politicians, and our continuation of exported weapons to continue the killings, I think of the words of George Orwell who wrote, during the Second World War, that: "Even if one does not deny that the crime has happened, even if one knows that it is exactly the same crime as one has condemned in some other case, even if one admits in an intellectual sense that it is unjustified – still one cannot feel that it is wrong. Loyalty is involved, and so pity ceases to function."

If "loyalty" can let us permit the killing of thousands of Palestinians it is a sad day for this country, in my opinion.

**R J Smith
Sutton-in-Ashfield**

Dear Comrades

Robert Burns was the son of a working gardener. He only had a basic education and worked the land from an early age. After his father – who had strong Jacobite sympathies – died prematurely, Burns and his brothers were left, Wood (2009) says, with a "poor, under-capitalised farm".

Indeed, the family tried, unsuccessfully, to make a living out of several clearly unprofitable holdings.

As Burton (2001) points out, this was an era of rural change. Peasants were finding themselves unable to maintain their debt bondage to landowners. Many farms were failing, and peasants were being squeezed out because of enclosures and "improvements".

Burns even had a stint as a dresser of flax and contemplated emigrating to the West Indies. What changed his mind was literary success. The publication of his poems in the form of the *Kilmarnock Edition* in 1786 saw him move to Edinburgh instead.

After a year enjoying adulation, he returned to the soil at Ellisland near Dumfries before becoming an exciseman. It was slightly ironic given that Burns had republican sympathies. Indeed, he was accused of having joined in with a rendition of the French revolutionary song *Ca Ira* in a Dumfries theatre. He was also alleged to be in league with a local grouping of the "Friends of the People" in Dumfries.

Certainly, Burns had written political poetry all his adult life. *Holy Willie's Prayer* attacks Calvinist ideas and religious cant. The *Address to Beelzebub* sees him allude to the Highland Clearances. *Why Shouldna Poor Folk Mow* was written against the background of a national seamen's strike. And *Scots Wha Hae*, clearly about Bruce and Wallace, also had coded attacks on the ongoing repression of the Pitt Government.

Morris (2009) confirms moreover that Burns remained a "staunch republican" until his death in 1796. How shocking then that after his death he should be "incorporated into service for the empire". His poetry would be sanitised and his image would be used as a tawdry decorative element in tourism and light entertainment.

**Alan Stewart
Wakefield**

Dear Comrades,

Imperialism is on the rocks. Capitalist economies in Europe are sinking fast. A bleak situation made worse by the self-inflicted damage caused by incompetent governments as they grovel to the USA and double-down on one disaster after another. This should have created the conditions for the left to make a comeback. Instead, it is the right-wing parties that have scored. Most of the so-called left parties and unions appear dead in the water, unable to accept reality and unwilling to inspire the new generation. They have embraced social democracy and in doing so sold their political souls to the devil. Revisionism destroyed the mass communist parties of Western Europe leaving only small genuine Marxist parties, such as the New Communist Party, to advance the cause of scientific socialism and to maintain a commitment to proletarian internationalism.

In Germany, coalitions of bourgeois parties have held power for decades. Any political challenges have been demonised by the media and parties threatened with bans and restrictions. Currently the dire economic situation in Germany has led to the emergence of new political parties on both the right and, uniquely today, on the left as well. The right-wing Alternative for Germany, (AfD) sent shock waves through the political establishment by winning the Thuringia state elections. Its policies include calls for deportation of immigrants, strong opposition to the EU, halting weapon deliveries to Ukraine and calling for an end to sanctions against Russia.

On the left dissatisfaction within Die Linke (The

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 25 JAN

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Vigil opposing 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 Elm-bank Crescent, Glasgow G2 4PS. Book on CND website.

WED 29 JAN

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Trade Unions Taking Action for Palestine in 2025. Webinar. 18:00–19:00. Register on PSC 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.

WED 5 FEB

Arise: Isaac Saney on his *Cuba, Africa, & Apartheid's End: Africa's Children Return!* 18:30–20:00, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. Book on Eventbrite.

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 13 FEB

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Nationwide day of action. Organise an event at your workplace for Workplaces4Palestine.

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

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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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

Not much is happening in Scottish politics that has not happened dozens of times before so the fact that the Leader of the Tory Group on Glasgow City Council defected to Reform UK made more waves than expected. It is unlikely that his defection had anything to do with the burden of high office: he only had one other person to lead.

The councillor was Thomas Kerr, who first won his seat in the working-class Shettleston ward aged 20 in 2017. He announced he was “scunnered” with the Tories but observed that: “Everywhere I went, people were talking about Reform: businesspeople, lawyers, punters in the pub, you name it.” So off he went.

coming from all quarters. Thirty local branches have already been established with more in the pipeline. And a minority, but a surprisingly large one, of those who voted for independence in 2014 are switching to the sternly unionist party. In some recent by-elections second preference votes were swapped between Alba and Reform, something akin to the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin lending support to each other.

The Scottish Faragists deny wanting to close Holyrood, after all it could be the source of jobs for them. They’ve also stolen one of the SNP’s long-standing policies – they’re very keen on developing the North Sea oil and gas industries.

This rise of the right should not come as any great surprise. These days the Scottish working class is not as left wing as the legend of Red Clydeside suggests. The Glasgow May Day march is a pitiful small-scale event compared with the mass gathering of the working people that takes place on the first Saturday of July in honour of events in 1690. Bouts of industrial militancy (in recent decades almost entirely defensive) are paralleled by the election of right-wing social democrats. It is noticeable that when even well-known and battle-hardened union militants enter the electoral fray they never do more than prop up rest of the results table.

On the far side of the constitutional divide the Alba Party is embarking on a battle to succeed their late leader Alex Salmond. Former Justice Secretary Kenny MacAskill has entered into the contest with the backing of Salmond’s widow on the grounds both attended Linlithgow Academy. He enters the fray against the party’s only MSP, Ash Regan, who came a distant third in the narrow Humza–Forbes SNP leadership contest

two years ago. MacAskill optimistically said Alba should support radical policies, adding that “we cannot allow a drift to the right or pursue a populist agenda pushed by wealthy oligarchs”. At the general election last year he secured just 638 votes or 1.5 per cent in his former Westminster seat, so it’s not going to be a battle of the giants.

Fishy Business

Fish farming is once again under the spotlight. Holyrood’s Rural Affairs & Islands Committee has come to life to deplore the state of the industry. Based in the sea lochs of the Highlands and western islands, it has long been a controversial industry.

The latest figures for 2023 show that it directly employs 1,480 staff work in the 200 aquatic farms. Another 1,000 are engaged in processing and marketing. The year was one of decline in terms of output, with the production of Atlantic salmon decreasing by 11 per cent to 150,949 while rainbow trout increased by six per cent to 9,258 tonnes.

It is an industry notorious for its pollution. The fish live in watery, tightly packed cages with a high death rate, which means lots of corpses need to be disposed of, either legally or otherwise. Their food-stuffs also cause pollution, in addition the medications needed to control infections caused by crowded cages goes everywhere.

The industry is almost entirely foreign owned. Out of the four large volume producers two, Mowi and Scottish Sea Farms, are owned by Norwegian-based multinationals. Bakkafrost Scotland is Faroese and Cooke Aquaculture Scotland is Canadian. All these companies use chemicals banned in their home countries. The

last large ‘native’ company was sold to the Norwegians in 2022. The few small Scottish companies still in the market make much of their ‘organic’ credentials.

In 2018 Holyrood devised regulations to tackle these problems but nothing much has been done. Last July the SNP Scottish Government announced it would introduce restrictions on the toxic chemical Emamectin but delayed that measure until 2028 after the fish farming companies and their trade body objected. It is fed to caged salmon to kill the lice that can plague them. This is excreted and pollutes lochs around Scotland, killing assorted crustaceans. These side effect have been known about since 2016. Then the SNP said it had to balance “significant concerns” from the industry with “a requirement to protect the environment”. Their choice between industry profits and the environment could not be clearer as they ignored a call from their own wildlife agency, NatureScot, who called for a limit to be introduced “as soon as possible”.

One example of just how much the Scottish Government is in the pocket of the industry is the fact that it concealed for a whole year the escape of 80,000 farmed fish in February 2023. This event would have spread disease to wild fish that are becoming endangered by the farmed fish industry.

Last week even the Tory Convener of the Holyrood committee deplored the lack of action in addressing such problems as the environmental impact of chemical use on fish farms and to simplify the planning process to allow farms to relocate from unsuitable sites. The Committee was opposed however, to a moratorium on new fish farms or the expansion of existing ones due to the possible effect on jobs, and of course profits, so that point was left unsaid.

...continued from page 8


Left), which was seen as too cosy with the establishment, has led to the formation of a breakaway party. For the first time a populist left party, the BSW, led by the charismatic Sahara Wagenknecht, is making a big impact. The lady was formally associated with the Socialist Unity Party of the esteemed German Democratic Republic before its annexation. The party’s priorities include higher wages, peace and security, secure jobs, improved health care and pensions. It is opposed to NATO and arming Ukraine. It also supports what it calls enlightened conservatism in relation to traditional family values and has taken an anti-immigration position.

There is growing support in Germany for BSW and its policies. The emergence of a new political platform has raised a num-

ber of questions. Has the BSW been able to adopt a realistic and practical stance on immigration issues? Also has it managed to realise a sense of proportion in relation to woke issues that allows it to concentrate on more immediate and important matters?

John Maryon
Suffolk

The NCP badge



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This defection brings the number Scottish Reform councillors up to five, with another joining the party but sitting as an Independent in Aberdeenshire. It remains to be seen if rumours that more are in the pipeline are true. While Reform is not very good at winning, in several recent council by-elections it has come respectably second including beating the Greens into third place in Glasgow, all this without a Scottish leader.

Reform now claims it has more individual members than Scottish Labour, although this is not a particularly high bar. Opinion polls also say they are riding high and will build on the seven per cent of the vote they secured at the general election when they put up what were largely paper candidates across the country.

Reform’s support is

Police crackdown on Palestine protesters

by New Worker correspondent

Leading anti-war campaigners and scores of other protesters were arrested last weekend as the police moved to break up a massive Palestinian solidarity demonstration in central London. The rally in Whitehall was called after the Metropolitan Police, under Zionist pressure, banned a planned march on the BBC claiming it would cause serious disruption to services at a nearby synagogue.

In response, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) announced plans for a rally and a peaceful protest against this anti-democratic ban. On the day the demonstrators were confronted with extremely heavy-handed and aggressive policing. With less than 24 hours' notice, the police had imposed a series of complex restrictions preventing people from assembling at various



points on Whitehall at different times of the day – notably an area at the centre of Whitehall from which rally participants were excluded for part of the day to allow space for a children's marching band to proceed up and down. As a result a number of people were arrested, without warn-

ing, on flimsy pretexts including simply for inadvertently standing in this central area at the wrong time.

Former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell, a maverick Labour MP, were issued cautions by the Met and interviewed on Sunday. Chris Nineham, the vice-

chair of the Stop the War campaign, was dragged off with 76 others, and although Nineham and some of the others have been bailed others remain in custody. Nine have been charged with public order offences including PSC director Ben Jamal and Jeremy Corbyn's brother, Piers.

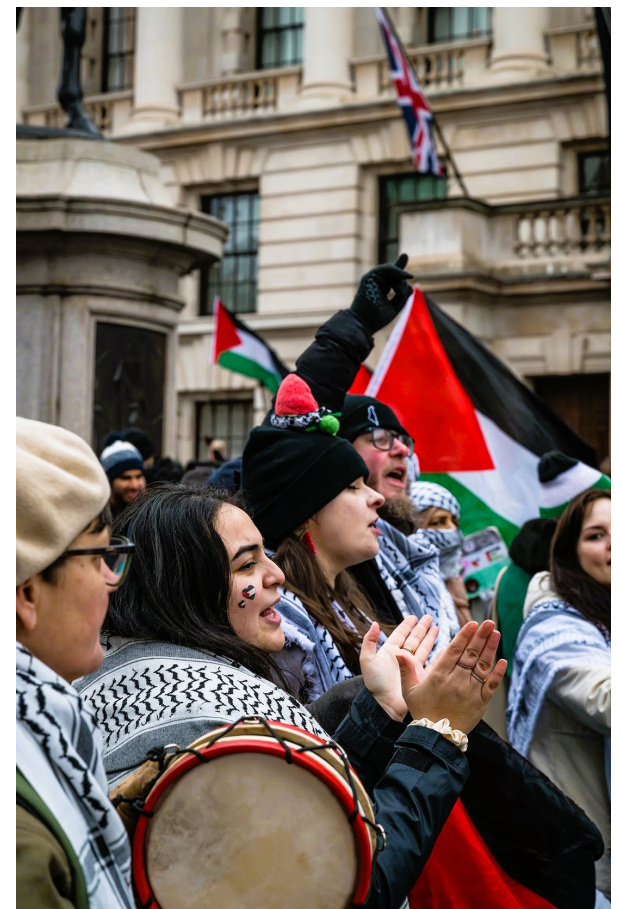
Ben Jamal said he would "vigorously contest" the charges against him and described the scenes on Saturday as "a huge assault on the right to freedom of assembly and to protest".

The Met claim the protesters had forced their way through a police cordon to march towards the headquarters of the BBC after ending their 100,000 strong protest in Whitehall. But Corbyn said: "This is not an accurate description of events at all. I was part of a delegation of speakers, who wished

to peacefully carry and lay flowers in memory of children in Gaza who had been killed. This

was facilitated by the police. We did not force our way through. When we reached Trafalgar Square, we informed police that we would go no further, lay down flowers and disperse. At that point the Chief Steward, Chris Nineham, was arrested. We then turned back and dispersed. I urge the police to release all bodycam footage and retract its misleading account of events."

Stop the War national officer John Rees said: "This is a direct assault on freedom of assembly and democracy. The police's actions, including their false statements after the event, are deeply troubling. We demand the immediate release of all those arrested and remain resolute in our campaign for freedom and justice for the Palestinian people."



ADL defends Musk's Nazi salute

by Brandon Chew

After calling Palestine solidarity protesters anti-Semitic the American Anti-Defamation League (ADL) defends Musk's Nazi salute. The ADL, an organisation with a stated mission of fighting against "all forms of antisemitism and bias", defended Elon Musk after the billionaire made a Nazi-style gesture amid celebrations of President Donald Trump's inauguration.

The ADL's defence of Musk has led some, including Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the representative for New York, to question the organisation's reputability as a consistent opponent of anti-Semitism.

Shortly after Trump was inaugurated on Monday, Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX and the richest person on Earth, spoke to Trump supporters at the Capital One Arena in Washington.

"Yes! This is what victory feels like! Yeah!" Musk told the cheering crowd. "And this was no ordinary victory. This was a fork in the road of human civilisation. There are elections that come and go, some elections are important, some are not. But this one really mattered. And I just want to say thank you for making it happen. Thank you".

After saying this, video from the event shows Musk slapping his right hand to his chest and extend his right arm upwards diagonally with his fingers to-



gether and his palm facing down. Musk then turned around and repeated the same motion to those behind him.

Amid controversy over Musk's gesture, the ADL quickly posted a statement on the social media platform X, which Musk owns, to defend the billionaire against claims he made a fascist salute.

"This is a delicate moment. It's a new day and yet so many are on edge. Our politics are inflamed, and social media only adds to the anxiety," the ADL stated.

"It seems that @elonmusk made an awkward gesture in a moment of enthusiasm, not a Nazi salute, but again, we appreciate that people are on edge," the ADL continued.

"In this moment, all sides should give one another a bit of grace, perhaps even the benefit of the doubt, and take a breath. This is a new beginning. Let's hope for healing and work toward unity in the months and years ahead."

Musk responded to the ADL's statement with "Thanks guys" followed by a laughing emoji. He later posted on X: "Frankly, they need better dirty tricks. The 'everyone is Hitler' attack is sooo tired."

White supremacists and neo-Nazis, however, were confident the salute was a message to them. Founder of the Christian nationalist far-right social media platform Gab, Andrew Torba, shared a video of Musk's gesture and said "Incredible things are happening already".

Keith Woods, a "self-described ethno-nationalist and antisemite", according to the Southern Poverty Law Center, posted the video clip and wrote "Ok maybe woke really is dead".

On Telegram, the Ohio chapter of the white supremacist Proud Boys group shared the video with the caption, "Hail Trump!" – an imitation of the Nazi "Heil Hitler" greeting.

It should be noted the

ADL's own definition of a "Nazi or Hitler salute" is "raising an outstretched right arm with the palm down". It should be further noted that X, which Musk acquired in 2022 when it was known as Twitter, has faced accusations of becoming a "thriving hub" of white supremacist and pro-Nazi content.

Jewish Voice for Peace, which defines itself as the "largest Jewish anti-Zionist organisation in the world", accused the ADL of hypocrisy for defending Musk after previous criticisms of pro-Palestinian protesters.

Amid nationwide protests on college campuses last spring in which students accused the Israeli military of committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, the ADL labelled such protests as being "marked by vicious antisemitic rhetoric, harassment, and intimidation".

Police officers dismantled encampments and arrested student protesters at several universities, in-

cluding the University of Pennsylvania, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the University of California, Los Angeles, Columbia University, the University of Texas, the University of Michigan and others.

"When college students protest to end genocide, the

ADL calls for militarised police across campuses. When the richest man in the world gives a Nazi salute on national television, they tell everyone to calm down," JVP said in a statement.

JVP has previously condemned the ADL as not being a credible source on the issue of anti-Semitism. JVP has accused the ADL of labelling "anyone opposed to the Israeli government's oppression of Palestinians as antisemitic" and of bigotry toward Arabs and Muslims. The ADL has accused JVP of pushing "antisemitic tropes" and supporting terrorists.

Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez said the ADL was "defending a Heil Hitler salute" in its support of Musk. "People can officially stop listening to you as any sort of reputable source of information now. You work for them. Thank you for making that crystal clear to all," Ocasio-Cortez said of the ADL.

People's World (USA)

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Cuba back on US “terrorism” list

“President Trump, in an act of arrogance and contempt for the truth, has just reinstated the fraudulent designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism,” says Cuban President, Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez. “It is not surprising. Its objective is to continue strengthening the cruel economic war against Cuba for the purpose of domination” he added, referring to the decision, on his first day, of the new President of the USA, who revoked 78 actions, executive orders and presidential memoranda approved by his predecessor, Joe Biden.

“The result of the extreme economic siege mea-



sures imposed by Trump has been to provoke short-

ages among our people and a significant increase in the

migratory flow from Cuba to the United States. This

act of mockery and abuse confirms the discredit of

the listings and unilateral coercive mechanisms of the US government. The legitimate and noble cause of our people will prevail and once again prevail,” the Cuban leader said.

The White House issued the executive order rescinding Biden’s Presidential Memorandum of 14th January, which stated that the Government of Cuba had not provided any support to international terrorism during the previous six-month period and offered assurances that it would not support acts of international terrorism in the future. The list of “restricted entities” (NSPM-5), created during Trump’s first term, in June 2017, was also reinstated.

Granma

Trump dives into the unknown

by Lyuba Lulko

Russia needs to take advantage of the moment as Trump dives into the abyss of the unknown.

The USA can no longer tell Russia what kind of world it wants. But with Donald Trump in power Russia may get a good chance to secure strategic victories, including what some analysts call a “second Yalta peace conference”.

President Trump portrays himself as a mediator standing above the Russia–Ukraine conflict. The USA however, is an active party to the conflict. In practical terms, the USA is engaged in a proxy war with Russia. This is evidenced by Ukraine’s exclusion from

direct negotiations with Moscow. Trump’s push for peace talks stems from necessity rather than from strength on the battlefield.

Primary challenges for the USA lie in its domestic agenda. Trump’s presidency may cause quite a mess at home, particularly in the economic sphere.

Debt-driven model

The American economy relies heavily on borrowing to fuel growth. Maintaining past growth rates demands ever-increasing debt, but rising interest rates have made debt servicing costs outpace GDP growth, raising fears of default. In 2023 US taxpayers spent over

\$1 trillion on interest payments for the \$36.2 trillion national debt. Projections suggest this will increase to \$1.2 trillion in 2025.

This rapid debt escalation is undermining business investment potential and household consumption. Additionally, sanctions have made US government bonds less attractive to foreign investors, which exacerbates the problem even further.

The budget deficit, currently at \$2 trillion – six per cent of GDP – has remained at this level for nearly two years. This is unsustainable for an expansion-oriented economy. With Trump again at the helm, the deficit is expected to widen further as tax revenues decline due to his promised tax cuts, while

spending on immigration initiatives, inflation management and debt servicing is expected to rise.

Inflation adds another layer of complexity. Consumer prices rose by 21 per cent during Biden’s four-year term, with significant increases in housing costs, fuel and services. Meanwhile, average hourly wage growth of 19 per cent failed to keep pace leading to a decline in real incomes. Proposed tariffs under Trump are likely to exacerbate inflationary pressures.

More problems

Trump’s immigration policies may back-fire. He’s announced plans for the largest

deportation campaign in US history. The campaign may target as many as 10 million undocumented immigrants who arrived in the USA during Biden’s presidency. This initiative however, overlooks its complexity, cost and economic impact. Thousands of persecuted illegal immigrants will rush to ‘sanctuary cities’ causing the corresponding states to aspire to separatism. Farmers and other industries dependent on migrant labour are likely to feel betrayed.

Meanwhile, tension is rising on the street. The globalists have not been defeated at all. They will look for any excuse to bring their supporters to the streets. This could be the murder of an illegal

immigrant, a black person or a person from a sexual minority, another school shooting episode or a natural disaster. The two camps in the USA are ready for a battle – and this is not going to be a ‘virtual’ one.

Trump’s aggressive rhetoric belies his uncertainty as he faces an unpredictable landscape. Political and economic contradictions are expected to intensify under his leadership, heightening instability in the USA. This weakens Trump’s ability to negotiate with Russia over Ukraine from a position of strength. Instead, any agreements might resemble the grand diplomatic arrangements of the Yalta Conference rather than a simple ceasefire.

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