

REVOLUTION

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IMT

FOR A SCOTTISH WORKERS' REPUBLIC
AND WORLD SOCIALIST REVOLUTION !

Final issue! Revolution will be back under a new name...

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In Defence of Lenin

100 years since the death of one of the greatest revolutionaries in history, read about Lenin's final struggle to preserve the Soviet Union from internal and external threats. ► Page 9

What really ended Apartheid

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LENIN LIVES!

REVOLUTION RETURNS!



CLASS AGAINST CLASS



"In our fight for freedom we are right up against it in all parts of the world, no matter what the nominal owners of the place we live in may be. Let us then be a part of the international workers; organised to overthrow the capitalist class of the world!"

— John Maclean

Café-killer Starbucks comes to Kelso

A NEW STARBUCKS CAFÉ is causing some controversy in the border town of Kelso.

The proposed new site has put pound-signs in the eyes of some local councillors who favour the global coffee giant taking over.

Some other independent café owners are naturally worried about being squeezed out by the monopolistic chain.

Starbucks protests that it is no threat to smaller businesses, which is completely laughable. The entire history of the company testifies to the opposite, from culling its rivals in its early days in Seattle, to its ubiquitous presence in town centres, along high streets, in shopping malls and elsewhere.

Starbucks is a global monster that controls a significant chunk of the international coffee market, owing to the fact it is the largest purchaser of coffee beans in the world.

Poverty wages, child labour and slave-like conditions are how it keeps the price of coffee beans low. The company is also known for its vicious anti-trade union practices in the United States, forcibly shutting franchises that vote to unionise.

Is this really something that Kelso needs or wants? •

"Let the 'socialist' snivellers croak, let the bourgeoisie rage and fume, but only people who shut their eyes so as not to see, and stuff their ears so as not to hear, can fail to notice that all over the world the birth pangs of the old, capitalist society, which is pregnant with socialism, have begun."

— Vladimir Lenin

Grangemouth closure threatens hundreds of jobs

HUNDREDS OF JOBS, and the livelihoods of many more could be lost as PetroIneos plans to scale-down the large oil refinery.

400 people are currently employed at the site near Falkirk, with only 100 jobs proposed for the new, smaller import terminal set to take its place.

Besides those directly losing employment, there will be a wider impact on the local economy.

Both the joint Chinese-British owners and the Scottish Government are keen to deny that the closure has anything to do with SNP-Green opposition to new oil exploration in Scotland.

Rather, they say that this is an opportunity for the flimsy rhetoric about a 'just transition' away from fossil fuels to be put into practice.

It will probably be impossible to

tell what distinguishes this 'just transition' from the regular type of capitalist deindustrialisation.

People will lose their jobs and income, wealth will drain away from where workers used to live, and the government will offer up 're-training' or some voluntary scheme to avoid complete social decay. In reality though, what use is being trained for jobs that don't exist?

Grangemouth is being closed not because of concerns for 'climate justice' or anything like that, but because profit margins were running thin. That makes the case for closure and moving the work elsewhere.

The idea of a 'just transition' under capitalism is an illusion. Only when the workers themselves control industry, planned according to society's need, will we see it. •

Greens push climate costs onto working people

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT plans to replace home heating systems with green alternatives will mean ordinary households paying the costs, with bills potentially running into thousands of pounds.

As part of the Government's plans for net-zero, which is consistently fallen behind on, home owners will be forced to pay to upgrade their boilers from 2028 onwards.

Despite the vast majority of pollution internationally coming from a handful of massive corporations, the petty-bourgeois Green party demands that ordinary working people

"Those who do not move, do not notice their chains."

— Rosa Luxemburg

should be saddled with the burden of 'de-carbonising'.

Such 'green' policies are a sham, and are bound to provoke a backlash that could undermine what it seeks to achieve.

Ensuring long-term sustainability requires nothing less than a complete revolution in how we produce and consume. This can only be done by harnessing the wealth of humanity that is currently hoarded by the capitalist class.

They should be the ones forced to pay, by expropriation at the hands of the working class. •

Homelessness to rise by a third

A REPORT from Heriot-Watt University claims that homelessness in Scotland will rise by as much as a third over the next two years, without drastic intervention.

Researcher Dr Watts-Cobbe says that the housing system is "under huge strain" as several local authorities declare a 'housing emergency' in their areas. Others, such as Fife Council, could soon follow suit.

18,400 households experienced homelessness of the most severe type, such as sleeping on the streets, in 2022 according to the study. Rough sleeping was up 11%, while use of B&Bs and hotels grew 12.4% between 2020 and 2023.

"The social revolution is entirely based upon the growth of proletarian consciousness and on the faith of the proletariat in its own strength and in the party which is leading it."

— Leon Trotsky

The report authors and the homeless charity Crisis recommend a number of measures to prevent and reduce homelessness, but local councils worry there is simply no money for these schemes. •

"In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

— Karl Marx

WHAT WE STAND FOR



Revolution is published by the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) — an organisation formed of revolutionary workers and youth, fighting for the programme and ideas of Marxism.

We stand for world proletarian revolution. Guided by the principles of revolutionary communism, the working class must take power in the interests of the poor and exploited masses of people. In one country after another, victorious revolutions will bring an end to widespread poverty, inequality and oppression.

Throwing down the parasitic bankers, landlords and capitalists, and breaking the chains of imperialist domination, the workers of the world can open a new chapter of human history. This future will be the culmination of the class struggles of today. Join us in this fight!

★ For a Scottish Workers' Republic and World Socialist Revolution! ★

- ▶ Reverse austerity cuts; provide full funding for the expansion of public services; repeal the anti-trade union laws; organise the unorganised.
- ▶ Introduction of a four-day week with no loss of pay. All workers must be guaranteed a decent job and a real living wage, with a weekly minimum income of at least £500. Put an end to unemployment, homelessness and poverty, which are a product of the capitalist exploitation of the working class.
- ▶ Kick the privatisers and profiteers out of education; abolish student fees and provide full grants for all students; democratic control of universities.
- ▶ Reverse all NHS privatisation; take the pharmaceutical companies and private health providers that leech off the NHS into public ownership. Create a national care service under the umbrella of the NHS.
- ▶ A publicly-owned, national transport system, under the democratic control of workers and passengers. Modernise and expand the network to rapidly cut emissions.
- ▶ A crash programme of social housing construction and renovation. Nationalise the land and construction monopolies. Limit rents to no more than 5% of net income.
- ▶ End Trident and other wasteful weapons of mass destruction: prioritise instead the health, education and culture budgets. No to NATO, AUKUS, or any other imperialist military alliance. Reject the bosses' Europe — appeal to the working class of the continent to establish a socialist alternative to the EU.
- ▶ For the real emancipation of women: end all forms of discrimination; equal pay for equal work; the right to abortion. Provide free nurseries and after-school childcare; school and workplace meals to end the burden of domestic labour.
- ▶ End the rule of the billionaires! Nationalise the big banks and monopolies without compensation to their rich owners. Run newly nationalised industries under a regime of democratic workers' control and management.
- ▶ Create a democratic plan of production overseen by committees of workers, pensioners, students, experts and others to meet the needs of society and the environment, eliminating the waste and want — poverty amidst plenty — of the market economy.
- ▶ Establish an independent Scottish Workers' Republic based upon a fraternal Socialist Federation with England and Wales. For a Socialist United Ireland.
- ▶ Appeal to the proletariat of Europe and the World to follow our example, overthrow the capitalist order and begin the construction of a global socialist society.

International • Marxist • Tendency

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Israeli Crimes and Media Lies

The distortions, omissions and half-truths about Israel's massacre in Gaza that the media supplies us with makes it more difficult to understand what is really happening, and provides cover for the Zionists' criminal aggression.

Sara Al Disi
— Edinburgh

Since the start of its latest brutal bombing campaign in Gaza, the Israeli war machine has unleashed horror on the Strip.

To justify their war crimes and genocidal acts, the Israeli state and media are churning out lies. And these are blindly repeated by western politicians and press without proper investigation.

Atrocity propaganda

The most shocking – and easily refutable – was the claim about '40 beheaded babies', which made its way onto the frontpages of Britain's newspapers. Without verifying the evidence, or looking into the incident, outlets such as the Financial Times, the Times, and the Scotsman all ran headlines echoing this myth.

The story originated from i24NEWS correspondent Nicole Zedeck, who in turn heard it from an IDF soldier. A spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu told CNN that babies and toddlers with their "head decapitated" had been found. Joe Biden also claimed that he had seen photographic proof of this atrocity.

Subsequently, however, IDF rep Doron Spielman stated to NBC news

that he could not confirm these allegations. Multiple other news agencies sought comments from the Israeli military and received similar responses. The White House was also forced to backtrack and make excuses for the US President.

Even after all of this, Sky News published an article with an ambiguous title, "what we actually know about the viral report of beheaded babies in Israel", instead of straightforwardly stating that this was nothing but a fabrication.

Hamas' hospital HQ

Claiming that Hamas runs a command centre there, the IDF bombarded – and eventually besieged – parts of the hospital housing thousands of patients and medical workers. This led to 15,000 people being displaced.

After forcing most people to evacuate, including very sick patients, Israeli forces entered the hospital and released a series of farcical propaganda videos, pointing out various pieces of supposed 'evidence'. This included tunnels, unused underground rooms, and rifles found behind an MRI machine.

But the rifles double in number between shots, indicating that the footage had been doctored. Furthermore, video and geolocation analysis by The Washington Post showed that "none of the five buildings [in

the Al-Shifa complex] highlighted by the IDF appear to connect to the tunnels".

The BBC and the Guardian eventually came to a similar conclusion, all saying that the proof provided "falls short" of confirming the Hamas HQ accusation.

The White House also downgraded its description of the suspected site, referring to it as a potential "command node" or possible weapon storage.

Even when the IDF allowed BBC journalist Lucy Williamson to visit the location, they only allowed her and one other reporter into the MRI room, refusing them any opportunity to interview patients or health workers.

Washington has backed the Israeli state's allegations, insisting

that Hamas was using the hospital, but fled before the IDF's operation.

Lest we forget, however, these assertions come from the same US 'intelligence' agencies that claimed to have irrefutable evidence for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. And we all know how that story panned out.

Truth and lies

Recent propaganda and falsehoods follow an extensive history of lies by the Israeli state.

One infamous incident was the cold-blooded murder of Palestinian reporter Shireen Abu Akleh by an IDF sniper in May 2022. The Israeli military falsely denied responsibility. And the western press all purposefully aided this obfuscation of the truth.

As with many other cases before and after October 7, Israeli officials changed their stories and provided no evidence for their assertions. But apparently the assurances of a representative of this criminal regime are sufficient enough for the mouth-

pieces of imperialism.

We do not pretend to be impartial. We stand firmly on the side of the exploited and the oppressed.

An old proverb correctly states that: "In war, truth is the first casualty." And in Israeli imperialism's war on Gaza, 'unverified claims' reign supreme.

The western media has played a shameful role in propagating these lies. At best, they provide almost-invisible caveats highlighting that their sensationalist headlines have not been verified. But even when a retraction is offered, and journalistic wrongdoing is later admitted, the damage is already done.

This shows why we need a workers' press: independent of the imperialists in Westminster or Washington; free to tell the truth in the interests of the working class.

We do not pretend to be impartial. We stand firmly on the side of the exploited and the oppressed. So support the revolutionary press! •



Hospitals, schools, homes and places of worship are being turned into mass graveyards by Israel's relentless attacks. Rather than expose these horrors, the bourgeois media runs with fake news demonising Palestinians, only to issue quiet retractions once Israel's lies are scrutinised.

SNP plans for rural Scotland are all for show

SNP proposals to address the crisis in rural communities through immigration after independence are more PR than progress.

Nishwal Gora
— Edinburgh

The National Records of Scotland has shown that rural Scotland – which makes up half of the country's landmass but only a fifth of its population – has had its population decrease at an increasing rate while that of the urban centres grow. This is a sign of the absolute economic and social decay in rural areas, which the SNP promises can be reversed in an independent Scotland through immigration policies.

Rural decline is especially sharp on the Northern and Western coasts, with regions like Sutherland, Caithness, and East Ross seeing their population numbers dwindle at an alarming rate. The demographic in these regions is also ageing, as the youth and workers head for the cities in search of better opportunities.

This internal migration isn't a matter of choice; it's a necessity to find a better life, or any kind of life at all. One revealing statistic is that one in eight people in rural areas live in income poverty, with over

30% of the population of Inverclyde living in the top 10% of the most deprived areas in Scotland.

Private companies don't see profit in extending power lines to some of these remote areas, forcing residents to use costlier heating alternatives such as oil and solid fuels, which can cost almost double that of gas heating.

Funding for public transport in rural areas has also remained exceptionally low for years. Sparse bus services and steep ticket prices make having a car essential, even though many families can't afford one. This makes it harder for young people to access education and employment, with students in remote areas travelling on average an hour to school and workers spending up to 15% of their weekly income on transport.

Job opportunities are rare in these areas, and when available, remain precarious due to being of a seasonal nature. The effect of low wages from these jobs is further inflamed by increased food costs, which are up to 50% more than in urban areas.

Even broadband internet, which many consider an essential service,

is only available to 52% of households in the Orkney Islands and 70% in the Highlands, compared to 96% in Edinburgh.

On top of this, wealthy speculators have been known to buy up rural property and land, keeping them empty while increasing housing costs and effectively displacing poor families. In fact, for the rich to uphold their illusion of the idyllic Highland countryside for their postcards, many have opposed the building of social housing which they see as an eyesore. Such is the cynical

nature of the capitalist class, whose aesthetic sensibilities and speculative activities are of greater importance to the State than housing for the majority.

In a new pro-independence policy document unveiled by Humza Yousaf, titled 'Building a New Scotland', the SNP suggests increasing immigration to address the decline of rural communities.

Whilst the Tories demonise immigration, the Scottish Government typically presents itself as migrant-friendly: opposed to xenophobic

sentiment and arguing for the economic benefits of immigration.

The SNP proposal is to repopulate Scotland's rural areas, which are haemorrhaging residents, by increasing immigration mainly from the European Economic Area (EEA) – an EU-oriented trade bloc the SNP imagines Scotland will effortlessly join one day.

Beyond its seemingly progressive veneer however, the SNP's 'New Scotland' does nothing to solve the real problems infesting rural Scotland, and the nation as a whole: the rotting carcass of capitalism.

Their draft proposals are just a band-aid on a bullet wound, which attempts to use shallow appeals to 'diversity' and 'inclusion' to cloak the real socio-economic problems. Such a proposal will only mean that immigrants would be forced to live in the very conditions Scottish workers and youth are trying to escape.

The means to lift workers out of poverty exist; it's a matter of taking the economy into the hands of the working class to plan it democratically, for the needs of the majority rather than the profits of a few. Only then can we truly eradicate the racism fermented by capitalists against immigrants and allow workers from all countries to lead dignified lives. •



Bankruptcy awaits for Scottish Councils — Workers will always be the losers of capitalism!

The SNP, Tories and Council leaders all blame each other for austerity cuts. Workers just have to deal with the consequences.

Orla Thomas
— Edinburgh

In December the Local Government Information Unit (LGIU) released survey results finding that 1 in 4 Scottish Councils face effective bankruptcy in 2024, with the SNP-Green Scottish Government's 2024-2025 budget only adding to the burden of austerity cuts.

Hypocrisy was rife from the very beginning of Deputy First Minister Shona Robson's statement on the budget. She claimed that the budget is "setting out, in tough times, to protect people" and "sustain public services", later going on to add: "in the face of Westminster austerity, we say we will always stand up for Scotland." Once again we see the Scottish Government pass the buck on to Westminster, to divert criticism of their own long-term policy of public austerity.

Homelessness charities Shelter and Cyrineans have been some of the most vocal critics, and for good reason. Affordable Housing Investment has been slashed by 26%, despite statistics released by the Government themselves in August this year revealing that 45 children are made homeless every day in Scotland. The budget sees cuts to housing more broadly too, with cuts also being made to Housing and Building Standards, and Fuel Poverty and Housing Quality.

The SNP's 2021 Holyrood manifesto had a whole section on 'ending homelessness'; how is this to be achieved without building affordable homes! The Scottish Government has consistently fallen behind on pledges to build more. Over the past ten years, they have mastered the art of the broken promise.

Other budget critics include the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) who have called the budget a "missed opportunity to set out vital support for Scotland's voluntary sector". Many of the services provided by unpaid volunteers are lifelines for people struggling with poverty. When these small community-based organisations are forced to fight for scraps of public money and are unable to plan long-term they can collapse under the pressure, causing damage to working class communities and redundancies for those in the sector.

The Fraser of Allander Institute at the University of Strathclyde explains in their analysis of the budget that despite an overall increase in spending, this is very focused on minimums for social security, local authorities and healthcare leaving all other sectors to face deep cuts and constraints.

The Institute points to education as a major area, with £100 million being cut from the Scottish Funding Council, which will almost certainly mean a decrease in university places that can be offered to Scottish students. Education is yet another area where the SNP's track record is a long list of broken promises. They pride themselves on Scotland's free university education, whilst simultaneously cutting funding for university places!

As if the national budget isn't

troubling enough, local councils have also clashed with the Scottish Government over their own funds. In October, the First Minister boldly announced a freeze on council tax, reviving a long-held SNP policy. Immediately this surprise announcement caused controversy, sending local authority leaders into a state of panic. LGIU's survey of local authority leaders and finance officers showed that a quarter of them believe they will not be able to provide balanced books in 2024. This will put them into an effective state of bankruptcy; something we have already seen with the financial collapse of local authorities in England such as Birmingham and Nottingham City.

Council managers assert that they simply do not have the money to run most public services at full capacity. 89% of respondents to LGIU's survey said they were already using their reserves, 73% were planning on raising council tax by 5-10% and 11% were planning on raising it by over 10%!

Many working households already are struggling to afford the basics due to rampant inflation and stagnant wages. If Council Tax – a regressive tax that disproportionately falls on poorer households – were to be increased, many families would crumble under the pressure. However, freezing council budgets is a death sentence to already overstretched services. Either way, working-class taxpayers are the losers.

The Government has claimed its Council Tax freeze will be 'fully-funded' but this is not the case: their funding formula only covers the minimum 5% increase, which is clearly less than many councils need.



Aberdeen council is at particular risk of bankruptcy, holding almost £5000 of debt per resident.

We can also see in the budget that this superficial increase to local council grants is just a reallocation of money from other essential services; 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' has been the standard practice in Holyrood throughout the SNP's administration.

Who has caused this crisis in the Scottish finances? SNP mouthpieces put all the blame on the Tories, but this doesn't get to the root of the matter. Fundamentally, the SNP are a bourgeois party all the same as the Tories, working within the constraints set by the capitalist system and ultimately serving the needs of the rich. In the current situation of economic recession and inflation, the big banks and business owners are demanding austerity for the working class, and limitless profits for themselves. All governments must either carry out this programme, or pose a revolutionary working-class alternative – it should be 100% clear by now what the SNP and Greens represent.

Austerity and attacks on the working class aren't simply moral choices made by the evil Tories in Westminster; they are a necessity of the capitalist system. Faced with this choice the SNP are attempting a balancing act, trying to walk a tightrope between the demands of the capitalists, and their voters, the majority of whom are working-class. This contradiction is impossible for the party to overcome – no man can serve two masters!

Whilst the SNP-Greens only offer paltry excuses, Communists get organised to fight the capitalist system. We say: expropriate the banks to fund our public services! No poverty in a rich country! For a Scottish Workers' Republic as part of the World Socialist Federation that can plan the economy in the interests of the workers, not the bosses! •

English Councils crisis: View from the frontline

Across the border, local governments are already facing financial collapse. To avert a social disaster, the working class must fight.

Socialist Appeal
— England

Alarm bells are sounding in local authorities across the country. Almost one in five councils in England are at risk of going bankrupt at some point in 2024. When asked by the Local Government Association whether they would be able to fully fund all essential services this year, around half of the council leaders surveyed said they could not.

For those reliant on such services, this news comes as a heavy

blow. The threat of further deep cuts means that those facing hardship can expect even less help than before. The workforce that is meant to supply these services, meanwhile, will be wondering whose jobs will go first.

Several council workers, under conditions of anonymity, agreed to speak to *Socialist Appeal* about the impact of these cuts, and the strain that a new round of austerity will produce.

One worker, whose job involves dealing with mental health provision across the North West, highlighted the challenges.

"Services in my local authority are spread thin as it is, with disastrous consequences for those who rely on our services. There are currently nearly 60 people in need of emergency mental health support on our waiting list."

He also made clear that the em-

ployers' solution to this was simply to overwork their staff. "Our bosses prey upon the genuine passion social workers have for helping vulnerable people, and keep heaping greater demands upon them."

He then stated that greater austerity would be like sacking firefighters in the middle of a huge fire. "Further cuts will mean that workers in social care will face an ever greater blaze – with no water and no reinforcements!"

The situation is much the same in the North East.

"Gateshead Council alone has a predicted shortfall of £27.1 million



for the year 2024/25," explained one worker in this local authority. "In Newcastle, the council is facing a shortfall of £15.4 million. Services are stretched to the limit, such as with social care costs spiralling."

With deficits running into the millions, councils are passing the buck by savaging services. "Many services have been stripped to the bone. Some have disappeared completely. There are pressures on every side. And the region is in desperate need of some relief from the constant austerity and cutbacks."

Nor is the North the only place dealing with such problems. Recently, Suffolk County Council announced its intention to cut budgets by £64.7m in 2024.

"The council have announced that £11 million of these savings will come from internal 'restructuring'," one council worker told us. "As everyone knows, this means reducing staff from services that have already been cut to the bone."

A large chunk of these 'savings' will come in the form of massive cuts to the council's arts budget, threatening many cultural projects in the area.

"I adore the daily challenges my role provides, yet I cringe when telling others where I'm employed at

the moment [because of these cuts]," another council worker, whose job is in this field, explained. "The work thrills me; the reputation mortifies me."

This worker pointed out that arts are not a secondary concern for ordinary people. "Though budgets tighten, creativity mustn't be stifled. The arts uplift communities and cutting funding damages society's soul."

These accounts are just a small taste of the chaos to come, as the Tories try to squeeze yet more blood from a stone in the local government sector.

With so many services on the brink, the trade unions must fight back. To overcome any demoralisation in the sector, as well as years of inertia on the part of unions such as Unison, a serious cross-union campaign should be launched to galvanise local authority workers.

Mass rallies should be called in every major city to bring workers together and win over the wider public. This should be a launchpad for large-scale coordinated strikes.

The aim must be to halt and reverse all the cuts, on the basis of a clear socialist programme that seeks to end austerity – and end capitalism – for good. •

Revolution Returns as... The Communist!

In this final edition of *Revolution*, we look forward to the launch of a new paper, *The Communist*, and back on the years of revolutionary agitation and propaganda published under our red masthead.

EDITORIAL 54

2024 will be a year of advancing class struggle. After a year of continuous scandals and upsets among the ruling class, and timidity and cowardice among the reformists, a powerful revolutionary tide is preparing to come in.

After many years unchallenged at the top of Scottish politics, the SNP were humbled by their own insoluble problems.

The spark for this was Sturgeon's resignation as First Minister and leader of the party, decapitating its broadly popular figurehead. Even those closest to Sturgeon and the political insiders were stunned at the sudden announcement, which marked the beginning of an anxious transition to the new leadership.

The fault lines running through Scotland's governing party, formally covered up by Sturgeon's authority and popularity, were laid bare.

Humza Yousaf, Kate Forbes and Ash Regan laid into each other, rubbing their skills as politicians and their record as Ministers. The whole sordid affair had the tone of a student union election rather than a decision about the future of the country.

Despite Yousaf's (narrow) victory, the divisions within Scottish nationalism have not gone away. Questions over economic and social policy, LGBT rights, the alliance with the Green party and the prospects for the independence movement continue to swirl around the SNP's parliamentary offices.

Getting bogged down in any one of these problems threatens to be a pole of attraction for discontent within the ranks of the party. That party membership itself has suffered

a precipitous decline over the past few years, as the sense that the SNP has nothing left to give sinks in.

Yousaf has been warned that several crises may erupt this year; over local councils going bankrupt, poverty and inequality sharply increasing, opposition within the party crystallising around the right-wing, or the party suffering losses at the next Westminster General Election.

It has already been stated throughout the bourgeois press that this year will mostly be an extended campaign for the General Election, which will in all likelihood result in the end of the Tory Government.

Though the situation may stabilise, through 2023 the SNP's once-unassailable lead in the opinion polls was gradually eroded. The threat of Labour taking over a dozen seats from the SNP is a very real one, to which Yousaf will have to respond.

The collapse of the Tories and the ascension of Starmer's right-wing Labour to Government will be met with only very muted enthusiasm. As anyone can tell, and he has been at great pains to make clear, Starmer represents continuity for the ruling class. The same policies of capitalist austerity, selling off education and the NHS to the private sector, demonising immigrants and youth, and following the USA into wars all over the globe will be in place the day after Starmer walks into Number 10 Downing Street.

Millions of people are crying out for an alternative to this sham 'democracy' however. This anger has been building for the past decade or more.

Once, it was captured by the sense of hope that surrounded the independence campaign. This has

not been forgotten, but with the SNP leading the independence movement into a decisive dead-end, hope is all most indy activists have left.

What laid under the grassroots of this movement was class struggle, and the need for the working class to throw off the chains of British capitalism. The need for a real revolution, as we said in issue one of *Revolution*. That need is still present right across Scotland and the world, and it is still our task and duty to foment that working-class revolution.

As members of the International Marxist Tendency we will be participating in a bold new venture, establishing the Revolutionary Communist Party this year, and launching a new paper in January: *The Communist*.

This will be a new beginning for the forces of Marxism in Scotland. We call on all those who wish to dedicate themselves to the advancement of the class struggle in 2024, to join and establish the RCP in all parts of Scotland! •



'Scotland Needs a Revolution!', issue 1. As true now as it was in September 2014!



'Unite for Class Struggle', issue 48

'Which Side Are You On?', issue 43

'Well burrowed, old mole!'

"We recognize our old friend, our old mole, who knows so well how to work underground, suddenly to appear: the revolution." — Karl Marx

We have been publishing *Revolution* since the dramatic days of September 2014, when the British ruling class got a shock as over one and a half million in Scotland voted for a rupture with the British state.

Looking back, we can see that this was only the beginning of a series of shocks to the system: Corbyn's leadership of Labour, Brexit and the Tory civil war, the global coronavirus pandemic and following strike wave.

We're now living in a changed world, where the objective prerequisites for a revolutionary explosion in Scotland are being prepared.

With our modest forces, we have sought to introduce genuine Marxist ideas and programme to the working class of Scotland, highlighting the necessity of independent proletarian organisation and revolutionary politics. While many on the 'left' have been blown this way and that by the storm and stress of the past period, we have set a straight course.

It is imperative, however, that we stay ahead of the tide. As communists, we must be in the vanguard of the struggle, teaching the working class how and why it must fight for revolution.

We have been striving for this, with many comrades contributing their best efforts to build up *Revolution* as a voice for the revolution to come. The launch of a monthly pa-

per last year was a bold step, and the foundation of *The Communist* will be bolder still.

Though we are saying goodbye to *Revolution*, we will continue our red crusade under the banner of *The Communist*, bringing you the same news and analysis, plus much more.

As a fortnightly paper for the whole of Britain, we will be able to keep on top of the pace of events much better, reach a broader audience and continue to develop the highest-quality analysis and theory that you can get in print.

In May of this year we will also be participating in the founding Congress of the Revolutionary Communist Party. Who else in Scotland can say that they are taking such firm steps to make Communism a force within the working class? Still



SUBSCRIBE TO THE COMMUNIST



33% OFF UNTIL THE 14TH OF FEBRUARY

there are none, besides ourselves. We hope that our readers will join us, contribute to *The Communist* and build it as the voice of world revolution in Britain.

To *Revolution*, we say: 'Well borrowed old mole'. And now: Long Live *The Communist*!

Theory & History

“Without revolutionary theory, there can be no revolutionary movement.” — Lenin

Boycott, Divest, Sanction? What really ended Apartheid

As Israel systematically violates the rights of Palestinians through its own brutal system of occupation, discrimination and apartheid, many activists look to the struggle in South Africa for inspiration. What really won though: the call for Western sanctions, or the call for revolution?

Ben Morken
— *Revolution (South Africa)*

There are many earnest people in the west who look to the BDS (Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions) campaign as a ‘practical’ way to show solidarity with Palestine. BDS calls for Israel’s economic and cultural isolation in order to hit the Zionists in their wallets. Its activists often point to the example of the racist Apartheid regime in South Africa, which, they say, was brought down in large part through sanctions and pressure from the ‘international community’. But is this really the case?

The theory is that a combination of consumer boycotts of Israeli products, withdrawal of investment in Israel by western companies, and the cultural starvation of Israel by artists and academic institutions will either force Israel to withdraw its illegal settlers from the West Bank, end its bombardment of the Gaza Strip, retreat to the 1967 borders, or dissolve its own state, depending on which of the boycotters you ask. In all cases, the professed objective is to end Apartheid for Arabs and win Palestinians a homeland using these methods.

As BDS co-founder Omar Barghout writes:

“This reference [to South Africa] is neither coincidental nor rhetorical. It stems from the many similarities between the two cases of colonial oppression... and it aims to highlight the effectiveness and moral unassailability of using the boycott in the cultural sphere to resist a persistent oppressive order that enjoys impunity and ample complicity from the powers that be around the world and to increase the isolation of oppressive regimes, like Israel’s.”

We sympathise with all workers and youth who are rightly horrified at the plight of the Palestinians, and are moved by a desperate need to ‘do something’. But facts are stubborn things. We must ask ourselves:

what was the relationship between the west and the South African regime during the Apartheid era? What were the conditions that led to the sanctions? And importantly, did the sanctions really lead to the overthrow of the Apartheid regime?

This is not merely an intellectual exercise: it is important that workers and youth around the world adopt tactics that can actually affect change, and not become lost in dead ends.

The West and Apartheid

For most of its history, the relationship between the Apartheid regime and the West was one of open and ‘mutual cooperation’, as the US State Department called it. In this sense, the situation did resemble that between the West and Israel today!

For countries such as the USA and Britain, the Apartheid regime was an important ally and strategic partner in the Cold War. From 1945 through to the 1980s, the government in Pretoria proved to be a reliable enemy of ‘Communism’. With the colonial revolution sweeping the African continent, many newly independent, former colonies in Africa passed from the Western sphere of influence to a non-aligned status, while others came under the influ-



Sanctified as some sort of pacifist liberal by the ruling class today, until 2008 Nelson Mandela was officially designated as a terrorist by the United States.

ence of the Soviet Union. By contrast, South Africa remained steadfast as an outpost of the capitalist system, an enemy of communism, and a firm ally to the West.

On the other hand, the imperialist countries regarded the African National Congress (ANC) and other liberation movements as terrorist organisations. Despite the way he is sanctified as a grandfatherly pacifist today, Nelson Mandela himself was arrested on 5 August 1962 by the South African police... based on intelligence provided by the CIA! He was put on the US State Department’s terror watch list and was only removed from it in 2008: 18 years after his release from prison! The West also regarded South Africa as an important market for western products and an outpost of western civilisation in the ‘dark’ continent. In turn, the regime provided the West with gold, coal and other important minerals from the country’s rich reserves.

All the major policies and laws that were to form the backbone of Apartheid were implemented in the immediate aftermath of the National Party coming to power in 1948. Some of the major laws forming the legal framework for the Apartheid were passed and implemented in the 1950s: the Group Areas Act, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Suppression of Communism Act, the Riotous Assembly Act, The Immorality Amendment Act, the Population Registration Act, the Reservation of Separate Amenities Act, and dozens more. The regime ruthlessly implemented all these laws for nearly four decades while the so-called Western ‘democratic countries’ tolerated and even propped up this racist dictatorship. Not to mention the western multinational corporations, which benefited greatly from the super-exploitation of the black South African working class.

The UN did eventually pass an arms embargo against the Apartheid government in the 1960s. But it was a typical, toothless ‘voluntary’ resolution that nobody paid any attention to. It was not until 1986 that multilateral trade and economic sanctions were declared. This had nothing to do with ‘human rights concerns’. Nor was it that they had suddenly ‘discovered’ the atrocities the Apartheid regime had committed for decades. Rather, it was done to try to cut across the mass revolutionary movement in South Africa



“For countries such as the USA and Britain, the Apartheid regime was an important ally and strategic partner in the Cold War. From 1945 through to the 1980s, the government in Pretoria proved to be a reliable enemy of ‘Communism’.”

that had broken out in the mid-1980s, which had begun to threaten the foundations of South African capitalism.

As we shall demonstrate, the aim was to pressure the hardline faction of the regime towards a negotiated settlement with the ANC and liberation movement from above, for fear of the revolutionary overthrow of the system from below. But how effective were the sanctions, even to this end?

Sanctions

The economic and trade sanctions that were applied in the mid-1980s actually had a very limited economic impact on the regime. The economic decline in the 1980s predated the sanctions, and the real cause was South Africa’s external debt crisis. As a result of the global economic crisis starting in the 1970s, many countries entered into negotiations on outstanding debts to reschedule terms with the bankers, including South Africa.

In 1985, the government responded to the crisis by declaring a moratorium on all short-term debt repayments. Shortly thereafter, Chase Manhattan Bank declared it would not renew its short-term loans, kicking off a liquidity crisis as other lenders followed suit. All of this preceded the multilateral economic sanctions. While foreign companies doing business in South Africa certainly experienced pressure in their home countries to divest, this was not in the calculations of the bankers. One Chase executive explained his company’s withdrawal by saying:

“We felt that the risk attached to political unrest and economic instability became too high for our investors. We decided to withdraw. It was

never the intention to facilitate change in South Africa, the decision was taken purely on account of what was in the interest of Chase and its assets” (our emphasis).

In September 1985, the European Economic Community imposed a set of very limited trade and financial sanctions on South Africa; and the Commonwealth countries adopted similar measures in October that year. The EEC banned imports of iron, steel, gold coins from and new investments in South Africa. Crucially, they did not extend this ban to cover the most important South African exports, such as coal, diamonds or other forms of gold. Japan passed similar sanctions shortly thereafter, although omitting iron ore.

In the United States, there was an open split in the ruling class on this matter. Congress passed the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act (CAAA) in 1986. President Reagan vetoed the legislation, but his veto was overridden in October. When the House of Representatives introduced its sanctions legislation in 1985, Chester Crocker, the assistant secretary, called this the “path of madness.” He considered Congress to be “carelessly throwing matches into an already explosive and volatile situation.” He instead advocated stronger economic engagement with the Apartheid regime, stating, “We Americans are builders, not destroyers.” The administration reasoned that the imposition of sanctions would only be a sign of the U.S. “impotence,” in that such measures could only “erode our influence with those we seek to persuade.”

Not since 1973 and the War Powers Act had the US Congress overturned a presidential veto on a foreign policy matter, and the president rebuffed so completely in this domain. It was a measure of how serious a concern the issue of South Africa had become for the US. A significant element of the Reagan administration’s ‘constructive engagement’ strategy involved Washington DC defending those multinational corporations that decided to remain in South Africa.

The White House was instrumental, for example, in establishing the US Corporate Council on South Africa. This body encouraged those

American institutions that operated in South Africa to stand up and publicise their positive work vis-à-vis countering Apartheid. This would demonstrate that there was an alternative to economic sanctions. At the United Nations, the US government, together with Britain used its veto at the Security Council, four times during this period to block economic sanctions being imposed.

This split in the US government meant that the sanctions were not tightly enforced. The CAAA restricted lending to South Africa and imposed import bans on iron, steel, coal, uranium, textiles, and agricultural goods. However, strategic materials, diamonds, and most forms of gold were omitted. The direct impact of these trade sanctions was therefore limited.

This can be plainly demonstrated by looking at the figures. In the decades leading up to 1974, real GDP in South Africa grew an average of 4.9 percent per year. From 1974 to 1987, it averaged 1.8 percent per year (mostly because of the general crisis, as we explained). In the immediate aftermath of the sanctions, GDP growth actually accelerated. It was 0.5 percent in 1986, 2.6 percent in 1987, and 3.2 percent in 1988. South Africa developed extensive measures to circumvent the sanctions, although these sometimes involved costly import-substitution. South Africa also was able to trans-ship through countries that were not participating in the embargoes. In fact, from 1985 to 1989, export volumes rose by 26 percent!

The disinvestment campaign, which largely consisted of private pressure but also included some government involvement, was actually more costly to the foreign firms that withdrew than they were to the regime. To circumvent the campaign, many disinvesting companies simply sold their assets cheaply to local white businessmen, but maintained non-equity links such as franchise, licensing, and technology agreements that permitted them to keep operating. Further, in September 1985, South Africa introduced a dual exchange rate regime to discourage disinvestment, whereby those firms that wished to repatriate their holdings did so at the "financial rand" rate, which was at a 40 percent discount to the commercial rate.

Although the trade sanctions cost of 0.5 percent of GNP is not trivial, neither was it large enough to be decisive. Also, local white capitalists often benefited from the fire-sale disinvestments and blacks were often hurt by the loss of jobs. Despite these sanctions, the Apartheid regime remained in power. While it is clear that sanctions had a psychological impact, this was nowhere near enough to swing the balance. The situation only qualitatively changed once the South African working class entered the scene.

Reform or Revolution

During the 1960s, the greatest economic boom in South Africa's history (based on soaring oil prices and horrendous exploitation of the majority black working class) resulted in growth rates that equalled that of Japan. Fortune Magazine wrote: "South Africa is one of those rare and refreshing places where profits are great and problems are small. Capital is not threatened by political instability or nationalisation. Labour is cheap, the market booming, the currency hard..." This was the real attitude of the capitalists in the West!

Yet, by the early 1970s, the South African economy began a long process of decline. Following the worldwide recession and the oil price crisis, the South African economy entered a sustained period of crisis. The recession brought a rise in unemployment, and inflation undermined wages. These conditions led to a dramatic rise in strikes and militancy in the working class. The repressive calm of the 1960s was broken as workers throughout the 1970s began to organise and make demands. This led to the emergence of a mass-based trade union movement. As a result of this, by the late 1970s and early 1980s, the ground began to rumble underneath the feet of the regime.

The contradictions of Apartheid began to manifest themselves and white-minority rule entered into a deep-seated crisis. The Soweto Uprisings by black schoolchildren of 16 June 1976 shattered the myth of invincibility of the Apartheid state. The state responded by killing nearly one thousand people during 1976/1977. In October 1977, the government banned 18 organisations and clamped down on the media. The Black Consciousness leader Steve Biko was murdered in detention. But putting down the revolt could not hide the crisis. It showed the impossibility of the regime continuing to rule in the old way.

There were other factors beyond the oil shock that combined to slow the rate of expansion. Labour market distortions inherent to the Apartheid system became apparent to big business. Blacks constituted the majority of the population but were restricted in their travel and in the jobs that they could hold.

One goal of the Apartheid system was to keep blacks living in separate areas from whites. As the South African economy developed, however, the employment restrictions became a hindrance to the functioning of the system as a whole. There was a need for a substantial increase in skilled workers. An expanding manufacturing sector created a demand for additional workers in the cities at the same time that a central goal of Apartheid was to keep blacks out of cities and in separate Bantustans.

As a result of the boom, in the 1960s, the weight of petty-bourgeois Afrikaner nationalism had declined in favour of big business, which now



pushed the government in the direction of reforms to overcome the crisis. After the Soweto Uprisings, it became clear to big business that the aims of the black opposition went much further than protests against racially discriminatory Apartheid policies. Led by the emerging working class, they were now challenging the whole economic system, based on cheap black labour, underpinning Apartheid. Big business responded by launching the Urban Foundation, a big project aimed at improving conditions in black townships.

Following the economic reforms, the government released a new constitution setting out its plans for political reform in 1983. The constitution provided for a new tricameral constitution with separate chambers for Coloureds [a legal classification at the time: non-white people who were not indigenous African], Indians and whites and a new executive state, which had extensive powers.

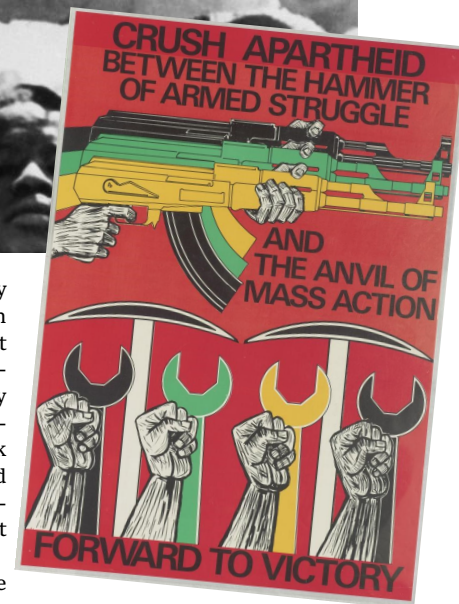
This constitution was firmly based on the Apartheid system, with white-guaranteed majorities in the bodies that made legislation. The constitution also excluded the African majority completely. Africans were not considered part of South Africa. Rather, they were seen as citizens of the Bantustans, which were ruled by ruthless and corrupt allies of the Apartheid state. The so-called 'reforms' did not constitute

reform at all. They simply streamlined white domination and control. It was an attempt to contain the political aspiration of the black majority by sowing further divisions between them. All major black working-class organisations and trade unions mobilised to boycott the tricameral parliament and the new constitution.

It is often the case that the most dangerous time for a dictatorship is when it lifts the boot and starts to reform. While the government was working on its reform project, a growing militancy was organising in working-class communities across the country. The most significant feature was the rapid growth of the trade unions. Driven from the shopfloor up, by 1981 they embarked on unity talks, aimed at creating a national federation. The result was the formation of the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU), which was later dissolved and replaced by the formation of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1985.

On 2 November 1982, a whites-only referendum endorsed the new constitution. In response, the black opposition, led by the working class, began to mobilise against the sham 'reforms' and the new constitution. These organisations began to organise successful boycotts, marches, and demonstrations against the ratification of the constitution. The aim was not only to voice opposition to the constitution, but to mobilise and organise against the regime. Big rallies were organised, and Indian and Coloured voters were successfully mobilised to boycott the tricameral parliament. Only 18 percent of Indian voters and 21 percent of Coloured voters would turn out on polling day. This was a clear rejection of the government's sham reforms.

On 3 September 1984, the tricameral parliament was introduced with pomp and circumstance by President PW Botha. On the same day, mass mobilisations erupted in the so-called Vaal triangle, the industrial heart of the country. Militant youth fought with the security forces in open battles. Soon, a hurricane of mass revolutionary mobilisations spread throughout the country. The existing structures of the UDF could no longer keep pace with the rapid mobilisation. At the same time, a clear leap in mass consciousness outpaced the official leadership. These uprisings ushered in a period where grassroots campaigns



snowballed into a mass revolutionary movement, which would shake South African capitalism for more than a decade.

At the beginning of 1985, South Africa was in the grip of a mass revolutionary movement. The townships were in open insurrection. The youth movement sparked the working class into action. The country was hit by waves of strikes as the workers began to lead the struggle. A two-day general strike crippled the country as the tricameral parliament was opened. The strike sent shivers through big business, raising the spectre of a general strike. In March 1985, even more successful strikes occurred in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape. These strikes were supported universally by the township residents. The Eastern Cape, with its powerful automobile industry, became the new centre of struggle. Community organisations supported the trade unions through boycotts of white business, which soon led to forced concessions from local authorities and the state.

Insurrection

The revolutionary movement in the Eastern Cape soon mushroomed into a national movement. By 1985, the country was in the middle of an open insurrection. The Apartheid state, with its reform programme in tatters, was on the ropes. Unable to halt the insurrection, PW Botha declared a state of emergency in July 1985 in 36 districts. Virtual martial law was declared in these areas. This only fuelled the fire.

The state apparatus was battling to get to grips with the situation. A big reason for this was that an alternative power was being created by the mass movement itself, which openly rivalled the existing state. Alister Sparks, a veteran correspondent for the London Observer at the time graphically gave an example how this alternative power was created in the Eastern Cape:

"The Port Elizabeth Youth Congress (PEYCO) effectively seized control of the Port Eliz-



→ abeth townships and ran them as the closest thing South Africa has to 'liberated zones'. Official black councillors elected under the Apartheid system were forced to resign or flee. Black policemen took refuge in protected camps outside the townships, black youngsters walked out of the school in protest at what they termed 'gutter education', and PEYCO street and area committees stepped into the vacuum. They issued trading licences and fixed prices in black-owned shops: they policed the streets and set up 'people's courts' to try common criminals as well as suspected criminal informers; and they talked about setting up 'people's education classes in garages and church halls.'

The revolutionary movement was creating its own structures, which chased out and replaced the official state. These embryonic forms of an alternative power – street committees, area committees, self-defence committees, etc., sprung up all over the country. By the end of 1985, only a handful of more than 100 local authorities the government had set up were still in existence. In their place, township residents began to set up grassroots street and area committees. This was the most serious threat, not only to the government but to the foundations of South African capitalism itself.

The government was unable to regain control of the townships, despite the state of emergency. Out of desperation, Botha declared a second state of emergency, this time covering the entire country. He gave the security forces total control and the regime resorted to naked terror to try to crack down on the revolutionary movement. Every day, there were reports of mass atrocities committed by the police and army. But the mass funerals that followed these atrocities only served to act as political rallies to spur on the movement. Tens of thousands of people would turn up at these funerals. In KwaThemba, 50,000 people turned up for a funeral of four students who were killed by the police. In East London, Newsweek estimated a crowd of 70,000. The police tried to place restrictions on the number who could attend funerals, which was openly defied.

By 1986, battles between the forces of revolution and counter-revolution were waged in the streets across all major cities. In the township of Alexandra, more than 20 people were killed in February during a week of battles with the police. 40,000 people gathered to bury the dead and in the following weeks the community took control of the area. Later that year, at a rally of 45,000 people the residents resolved to form 'self-defence units' to protect themselves. One witness reported that... "everyone seems to be involved as if it was some kind of community project." Such was the mood of militancy across the country.

The ruling class was brought face-to-face with a dire threat to their system in the form of a mass revolution by the black working class. The regime stood at risk of being forcefully overthrown, which compelled the ruling class to consider different measures other than brutal state repression to try to contain the black working class and avert revolution. So serious was the situation for the government that Botha unsuccessfully offered the conditional release from prison of Nelson Mandela as early as January 1985, on the condition that he re-

nounce "violence" and "violent protests". Of course, what he meant was: to stop the government from being overthrown in revolution.

Unable to douse the flames of revolt, the government lifted the state of emergency and abolished the pass laws, which in any event, could not be effectively enforced. But this only buoyed the revolutionary forces. May Day 1986 saw the biggest general strike in the country's history. This was repeated a few weeks later, to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Soweto Uprisings on 16 June. The initiative lay with the black revolutionary working class. The ANC had effectively been 'unbanned' by the movement of the masses. At the local level, the Apartheid state had virtually collapsed.

Betrayal

The more intelligent section of the ruling class realised that, if they did not grant reforms and open negotiations with the leaders of the ANC and other liberation movements, their whole system was at risk. The longer the state of emergency remained in force, the more its impotence became evident.

These were the conditions under which the imperialist countries imposed sanctions on the Apartheid regime, in an attempt to isolate the hardline faction of the ruling class around Botha. As noted, they were not very impactful in any case, but their aim was never to the aid of the working class, fighting for the overthrow of the Apartheid regime, but precisely to cut across the revolution and push the regime to open negotiations with the ANC and the leaders of the liberation movement. A sense of paralysis gripped the government, preparing the conditions for Botha's removal from office and his replacement by F.W. de Klerk.

It was from this period onwards that a series of meetings between the exiled ANC and groupings from within the South African ruling class began to take place: a process that was unprecedented, especially since the ANC had been banned since 1960 and was prohibited in any form inside the country. The process saw white business groups, including prominent Afrikaners and big businessmen, but also representatives of anti-Apartheid organisations, for the first time initiating contact with the liberation movement. The meetings led to the eventual dissolution of the forms of prohibition placed on the liberation movements, and their eventual return and democratic elections in 1994.

However, even while the talks went on, the working class stepped



up its mobilisations. On 26 July 1989, the Mass Democratic Movement, COSATU and the United Democratic Front called for a National Defiance Campaign. The response was overwhelming throughout the country. White facilities were invaded, and banned organisations declared themselves 'unbanned', initiating a period of open and mass defiance of Apartheid laws. Again, the apparently fearsome regime was powerless to prevent this.

In mid-September, mass marches took place in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Pretoria, with marchers openly flying the ANC flag, which was until then still a banned organisation. In smaller cities, such as Uitenhage in the Eastern Cape, a huge march seemed to dwarf those of the larger centres. This revolutionary mass movement struck terror into the very heart of the regime. Seeing that the game was up, the government of F.W. de Klerk now decided to commit itself fully to negotiations, and by October all political prisoners were released. Nelson Mandela was released on 11 February 1990 as a result of the revolutionary movement of the working class.

On 10 April 1993, Chris Hani, a popular leading member of the South African Communist Party was assassinated by an anti-communist Polish immigrant, with the help of a far-right nationalist. For more than 10 days, the mass movement that resulted from this suspended the regime in mid-air. A general strike a few days later paralysed the country. A mass demonstration of hundreds of thousands of workers crippled Johannesburg. This movement had the potential to sweep away the entire regime, had the ANC leadership pointed that way. Instead, Nelson Mandela, appearing on television and in the media, called for

calm:

"Tonight I am reaching out to every single South African, black and white, from the very depths of my being. A white man, full of prejudice and hate, came to our country and committed a deed so foul that our whole nation now teeters on the brink of disaster. A white woman, of Afrikaner origin, risked her life so that we may know, and bring to justice, this assassin. The cold-blooded murder of Chris Hani has sent shock waves throughout the country and the world. ... Now is the time for all South Africans to stand together against those who, from any quarter, wish to destroy what Chris Hani gave his life for – the freedom of all of us."

Nelson Mandela used all his authority to hold back the movement and restarted the negotiations with the regime. Together with Cyril Ramaphosa, who was leading the ANC's negotiations delegation at the time, he used the moment to press for an election date. The Apartheid state was effectively replaced by the Transitional Executive Council (TEC) – a provisional body composed of all parties in the negotiations process. This body ran the country until elections were held on 27 April 1994. The truth is that, had there been a real Bolshevik leadership at the head of the movement at this stage, the masses could have taken power.

The result of those negotiations was that the economic wealth remained untouched, while state power was in the hands of the ANC elites. Although the Apartheid regime was formally overthrown, the living conditions of the masses of black people have hardly improved. The reason is the negotiated settlement that was reached between the liberation movement and the Apartheid regime in 1993, which resulted in state power placed in the hands of

the new black elite, while the economy would remain in the traditional white ruling class. Since then, parts of the black elite have joined the traditional capitalist class. None of this has improved the lot of the South African masses, who still face brutal exploitation and discrimination.

What is to be done?

There are indeed many lessons to be learned from the real history of the struggle against Apartheid. The truth is that the hated regime was not overthrown by international sanctions and disinvestments. As we have seen, these had a minimal impact on the regime. Moreover, the aim of the international sanctions was never to help the workers of South Africa in their struggle against Apartheid. Rather, it sought to cut across the revolutionary movement by pressuring Botha to start negotiations, which would save the system from being overthrown by revolutionary means.

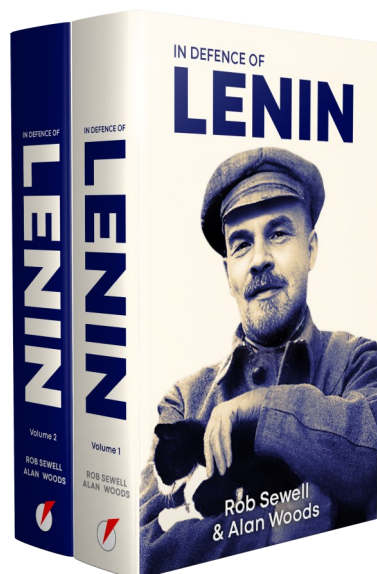
The key lesson is that the decisive blow against the Apartheid regime was dealt by a revolutionary mass movement, led by the South African working class. Moreover, the post-Apartheid regime that emerged – based on capitalism, with the ANC becoming the main representative of the South African bourgeoisie – did nothing to raise the living standards of the newly 'liberated' black population. This is also an important lesson for the Palestinian liberation struggle. A 'free' Palestine, on a capitalist basis, would see Palestinian workers dominated by stronger economies in the region, and imperialism abroad, with a local parasitic elite scraping together all the crumbs from their masters' table.

Communists stand unequivocally for a Palestinian homeland, but genuine freedom can only come on the basis of a revolutionary struggle for socialism, in tandem with workers and youth in the whole of the Middle East, to finally break the grip of imperialism, oppression and despotism. Such a struggle would never have the support of the so-called 'international community', as it would threaten the very foundations of capitalism in the region.

This is not to say the Palestinians must fight alone. To all workers and youth in the west, we say: struggling against one's own ruling class is a far greater contribution to the cause of Palestinian freedom than any number of consumer boycotts. We should not have any illusions in worthless talking shops like the UN to hold Israel to account for its crimes, let alone our own governments, which back the Zionist regime to the hilt. Instead, the labour movement can and should use its collective might to isolate the Israeli state with strikes, blockades and boycotts targeting its war machine. Not a single nut, bolt or screw should be allowed to leave western ports intended for use in weapons turned against the Palestinian people.

Beyond that, struggling for socialism at home is the only way to establish regimes that can support the Palestinians, and all oppressed peoples of the world, on the basis of genuine solidarity.

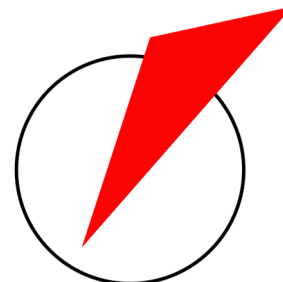
We say: join the communists, and fight for an end to the system that keeps Palestine in bondage. Intifada until victory! Revolution until victory! •



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In Defence of Lenin — Part III

This is the final part of our serialised article on the legacy of Vladimir Lenin. Last issue the Bolsheviks seized power, starting a brutal struggle against counter-revolution. Lenin led the defence of the elementary workers' state, only for the threat of degeneration to take root due to the delay in the world revolution he expected to rescue Soviet Russia.

Rob Sewell
— London

The Social-Revolutionary party leadership endorsed the principle of foreign imperialist intervention to "restore democracy". A similar counter-revolutionary position was held by the Mensheviks, which placed them in the enemy camp. They collaborated with the Whites and took money from the French government to carry out their activities.

In the summer of 1918 attempts were made to murder Lenin and Trotsky. On 30th August, Lenin was shot, but managed to survive. On the same day, Uritsky was assassinated, as was the German ambassador, Volodarsky was also killed. The plot to blow up Trotsky's train was fortunately foiled. This White Terror served in turn to unleash the Red Terror in defence of the Revolution.

The White Terror was played down by the capitalists, who blamed everything on the Reds. White atrocities "were generally the work of individual White generals and warlords and were not systematic or matters of official policy", explains Anthony Read, in an attempt to excuse them. "But they often matched and sometimes outdid the Red Terror." In fact, as a policy they always outdid the Red Terror in terms of brutality, as is the nature of counter-revolutionary forces.

Interestingly, Read goes on to describe the methods of General Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg. "No Bolshevik, for instance, could equal the White General Baron Roman von Ungern-Sternberg, a German Balt born in Estonia, who was sent by the Provisional Government to the Russian far east, where he claimed to be a reincarnation of Genghis Khan and did his best to outdo the Mongol conqueror in brutality. A fanatical anti-Semite, in 1918 he declared his intention of exterminating all the Jews and commissars in Russia, a task he set about with great enthusiasm, having his men slaughter any Jew they came across in a variety of barbarous ways, including skinning them alive. He was also noted for leading his men in nocturnal terror rides dragging human torches across the steppe at full gallop, and for promising to 'make an avenue of gallows that will stretch from Asia across to Europe'."

This was the fate that awaited the workers and peasants of Russia in the event of a victory of the counter-revolution. It was the fate of Spartacus and his slave army at the merciless hands of the Roman slave-state. The alternative to Soviet power was no "democracy" but the most brutal bloodthirsty fascist barbarism. The whole effort of the Red Army and the Cheka, the security

force, was therefore directed at winning the Civil War and defeating the counter-revolution.

The Soviet government had no alternative but to fight fire with fire, and to make a revolutionary appeal to the troops of foreign intervention. As Victor Serge explained:

"The toiling masses use terror against classes which are in a minority in society. It does no more than complete the work of newly arisen economic and political forces. When progressive measures have rallied millions of workers to the cause of revolution, the resistance of the privileged minorities is not difficult to break at this stage. White terror, on the other hand, is carried out by these privileged minorities against the labouring masses, whom it has to slaughter, to decimate. The Versailles (name given to counter-revolutionary forces that put down the Paris Commune) accounted for more victims in a single week in Paris alone than the Cheka killed in three years over the whole of Russia."

A period of "War Communism" was forced upon the Bolsheviks, where grain was forcibly requisitioned from the peasants to feed the workers and soldiers. Industry, ravaged by sabotage, war and now civil war, was in a state of complete collapse.

The imperialist blockade crippled the country. The population of Petrograd fell from 2,400,000 in 1917 to 574,000 in August 1920. Typhoid and cholera killed millions. Lenin described the situation as "Communism in a besieged fortress".

On 24th August 1919, Lenin wrote: "industry is at a standstill. There is no food, no fuel, no industry." Faced with this disaster, the Soviets relied upon the sacrifice, courage and will-power of the working class to save the revolution. In March 1920, Lenin declared "The determination of the working class, its inflexible adherence to the watchword 'Death rather than surrender!' is not only a historical factor, it is the decisive, the winning factor."

Aftermath of the Civil War

Under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, who had organised the Red Army from scratch, the Soviets were victorious, but at a terrible cost. Deaths at the front, famine, disease, all combined with economic collapse.

By the end of the Civil War, the Bolshevik government was forced to make a retreat and introduce the New Economic Policy. This allowed the peasants a free market in their grain and contributed to the growth of strong capitalist tendencies, resulting in the emergence of the Nepmen and Kulaks. It was simply a breathing space.

Given the low cultural level,

where 70% of the population were illiterate, the Soviet regime had to rest for support on the old Tsarist officers, officials and administrators, who were opposed to the revolution. "Scratch the soviet state at any point and underneath you will see the same old Tsarist state apparatus", stated Lenin bluntly. With the continuing isolation of the revolution, this constituted a grave danger through a bureaucratic degeneration of the revolution. The working class was systematically weakened by the crisis. The Soviets simply ceased to function in this situation as the careerists and bureaucrats filled the vacuum.

Despite measures being introduced to combat this bureaucratic menace, the only real saviour of the revolution was the success of the world revolution as material assistance from the West.

In early 1919 Lenin had established the Third International as a weapon for spreading the revolution internationally. It was a school of Bolshevism. Mass Communist Parties were soon established in Germany, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia and other countries.

Unfortunately, the revolutionary wave following the First World War was defeated. The revolution in Germany in 1918 had been betrayed by the Social Democrats. The young Soviet Republics in Bavaria and Hungary had been crushed in blood by the counter-revolution. The revolutionary factory occupations in Italy in 1920 had also been defeated. Once again, in 1923, all eyes were on Germany which was in the grip of a revolutionary crisis. However, the false advice given by Zinoviev and Stalin resulted in its tragic defeat.

This came as an almighty blow to the morale of the Russian workers, who were hanging on by the skin of their teeth. At the same time, the defeat reinforced the growth of bureaucratic reaction in the state and the Party. With the incapacity of Lenin following a series of strokes, Stalin began to emerge as the figurehead of the bureaucracy. In fact, Lenin's last struggle was in a bloc with Trotsky against bureaucracy and Stalin. Stalin retreated, but a final stroke left Lenin paralysed and speechless.

Prior to this, Lenin had drawn up a Testament. In it he states Stalin "having become General Secretary,

"The subsequent defeat of the international revolution in Britain and especially China, served to further demoralise the Russian workers, exhausted by years of struggle. On the basis of this terrible weariness, the bureaucracy, headed by Stalin, consolidated its stranglehold. Lenin's body, against the protests of his widow, was then placed in a mausoleum."



[which Lenin opposed - RS] has unlimited authority concentrated in his hands, and I am not sure whether he will always be capable of using that authority with sufficient caution." "Comrade Trotsky, on the other hand... is distinguished not only by outstanding ability. He is personally perhaps the most capable man of the present CC..." He warned there was a danger of a split in the Party.

Stalinism

Two weeks later, Lenin added an addendum to his Testament after Stalin swore at and abused Krupskaya for helping Trotsky and others communicate with Lenin. Lenin broke off all personal relations with Stalin. "Stalin is too rude and this defect, although quite tolerable in our midst and in dealings among us communists, becomes intolerable in a General Secretary", stated Lenin. He urged that Stalin be removed from his position due to his disloyalty and tendency to abuse power.

But on 7th March 1923, Lenin suffered a stroke that rendered him completely incapacitated. He would remain in this state until his death on 21st January 1924. Lenin's removal from political life gave increased power to Stalin, which he used to full advantage, not least in suppressing Lenin's Testament.

It was left to Trotsky to defend Lenin's heritage, which was being

betrayed by Stalin. The victory of Stalinism was due fundamentally to objective reasons, above all the terrible economic and social backwardness of Russia and its isolation.

The subsequent defeat of the international revolution in Britain and especially China, served to further demoralise the Russian workers, exhausted by years of struggle. On the basis of this terrible weariness, the bureaucracy, headed by Stalin, consolidated its stranglehold. Lenin's body, against the protests of his widow, was then placed in a mausoleum.

It is a monstrous lie to suggest that Stalinism is the continuation of the democratic regime of Lenin, as the apologists of capitalism claim. In reality, a river of blood separates the two. Lenin was the initiator of the October Revolution; Stalin was its grave-digger. They had nothing in common.

We end this tribute with the fitting words of Rosa Luxemburg:

"Whatever a party could offer of courage, revolutionary far-sightedness and consistency in a historic hour, Lenin, Trotsky and the other comrades have given in good measure. All the revolutionary honour and capacity which Western social democracy lacked was represented by the Bolsheviks. Their October uprising was not only the actual salvation of the Russian Revolution; it was also the salvation of the honour of international socialism."

One hundred years after his death, we pay homage to this great man, his ideas and courage. Lenin combined theory with action and personified the October Revolution. Lenin and the Bolsheviks changed the world; our task at this time of capitalist crisis is to finish the job. •



Lenin weeps while a Soviet tank runs over a sign representing the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, 1968. The rise of Stalin marked an end to the revolutionary proletarian policies of Lenin, and the triumph of the counter-revolutionary bureaucracy.

International



News & Analysis

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Ukraine: NATO Stares Defeat in the Face

While Western leaders continue to pay lip service to Ukraine in public, behind closed doors reality is sinking in. Ukraine cannot win, and can barely hold the front against Russia, leading to splits in Kyiv and despondency in Washington. Though thousands of Ukrainians have died as NATO's cannon fodder, they have nothing to show for it.

Jorge Martín
— marxist.com

The complete failure of the much-hyped 2023 Ukrainian counter-offensive has opened a chorus of mutual recriminations within Ukraine and between Kyiv and its imperialist puppet masters. Funding for the proxy war against Russia is drying up in Washington, Brussels and Berlin, and so western imperialism is now pushing Zelensky into a course of action which he is resisting as it spells his political (and perhaps physical) death: peace talks with Putin.

This is the same course of action that they sabotaged previously when, puffed up by their own propaganda, they predicted that their war might even end in regime change in Moscow. Whatever ends up being signed at the negotiating table will merely reflect the real situation on the ground. That situation is now much more favourable to the man in the Kremlin than it was when Boris was sent to Kyiv to scupper peace

talks 20 months ago.

Putin has brushed aside all talk of peace negotiations, stating bluntly that there will be peace when his aims are achieved. The danger now for NATO is not so much an ugly stalemate as much as another humiliating defeat and a clear victory for Russia.

The western media is full of gloomy articles predicting Ukraine's defeat if the latest package of military and financial aid from the US is not approved. Of course, some of this is meant to blackmail reluctant Republicans to vote for it. But the very fact that the same propaganda machine – that not so long ago was confidently predicting a Russian rout at the front, the collapse of the Russian economy under the weight of sanctions, and the removal of Putin through a military coup – is now openly discussing not just a stalemate but Ukrainian defeat, is a measure of how bad things are on the ground.

Gloomy assessments

The latest paper by the US-based Institute for the Study of War, usual-

ly a gung-ho outlet tending to exaggerate and hype up the position of Western imperialism in Ukraine, is entitled "Military-Strategic and Financial Implications of Russian Victory", and opens with these lines:

"A Russian conquest of all of Ukraine is by no means impossible if the United States cuts off all military assistance and Europe follows suit... Russians have replaced (...) manpower losses and are ramping up their industrial base to make good their material losses at a rate much faster than their pre-war capacity had permitted."

First off the bat in the current wave of gloomy but realistic assessments was none other than the Ukrainian commander-in-chief General Valery Zaluzhny himself on 1 November in a headline-grabbing interview with *The Economist* in which he admitted the war was at a stalemate. "Five months into its counter-offensive, Ukraine has managed to advance by just 17 kilometres", the *Economist* opened the article. Zaluzhny, in the nicest, most diplomatic way possible, blamed the West for having "been overly cautious in supplying Ukraine with their latest technology and more powerful weapons". He is not wrong.

The whole premise of Washington's proxy war in Ukraine was to use Ukrainian soldiers as cannon fodder in order to weaken and wear out Russia, but at the same time to prevent escalation into an open conflict between Russia and NATO.

The main take away from Zaluzhny's interview though is that "there is no sign that a technological breakthrough, whether in drones or in electronic warfare, is around the corner" that can change the current stalemate. Therefore, "Ukraine is stuck in a long war—one in which he [Zaluzhny] acknowledges Russia has the advantage".

Of course, in the last few months we have seen veiled recriminations from NATO officials blaming the Ukrainians for not having properly followed the counter-offensive strategy that they advised. NATO sources have a point when they say that the Ukrainian army spent too much time defending Bakhmut for purely political and prestige reasons, thus diverting precious forces from other sectors of the frontline where they could have had a bigger impact. This is wholly in keeping with the public-opinion-seeking war of propaganda, which former TV star Zelensky has been conducting in order to secure a consistent and ever-growing supply of weapons, money and intelligence from his paymasters in the West.

Argentina reels from 'shock therapy'

ARGENTINA'S NEWLY ELECTED 'Libertarian' President Javier Milei made no secret about his plans for the country: to devastate public services and pick the pockets of the poor.

As a result of his policies, Argentines can be found searching through bins for scraps of food on the streets of Buenos Aires. The value of the Argentine Peso has been destroyed, while Milei tries to get

his countrymen to adopt the US Dollar.

The rumble of opposition has already begun, with trade union leaders calling for a general strike on the 24th of January. In response to ongoing protests, President Milei – who claims to believe in freedom, remember – has all but banned demonstrations, ordering harsh repressions. The stage is being set for a huge class battle.

Zaluzhny's interview was not only aimed at defending his own record. It is highly unusual for an army leader to come out publicly in wartime against the country's president. Zelensky was quick to counter-attack. In an interview with a British tabloid, he warned army chiefs not to meddle in politics and to respect the hierarchy of the chain of command.

Maryana Bezuglaya, a deputy for Zelensky's own Servant of the People ruling party alleged that *The Economist* article had been placed through Czech Ukrainian oligarch Tomáš Fiala, the owner of *Ukrainska Pravda*, and that the aim was to undermine the president and boost the general's electoral prospects. Bezuglaya demanded the resignation of Zaluzhny, saying he had "no plan for 2024", only to then backtrack.

Ukrainian media reported that a recent poll by Rating revealed that a hypothetical Zaluzhny party would gain 36 percent of the vote, beating a Zelensky party, which would come second with 26.7 percent. Just in case, Zelensky decided to cool down any talk of presidential elections, which he himself had earlier announced.

Zelensky alone

A feature length interview on the cover of *Time* magazine on 30 October pictured Zelensky as a lone, slightly mad figure, the only one who still believed in Ukraine's victory. "The lonely fight of Volodymyr Zelensky" was the subheading. Gone are the days of the hero of Kyiv splashed across the frontpages of the western media.

Success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan, and now that things are going badly at the front, the mood in Kyiv's political and oligarchic circles has become extremely fractious, the president coming under open criticism and the wildest rumours (including that Zaluzhny is a Russian asset) are given credence.

Just a few days after Zaluzhny's interview in *The Economist*, his main aide was killed in a "hand grenade accident". Zelensky himself fuelled the rumour mill with a statement about a Russian plot to cause a "Maidan 3" coup to remove him from power.

Kyiv's mayor and former professional boxer Klitschko joined the open season with an interview with *Der Spiegel* in which he accused Zelensky of behaving in an authoritarian manner and comparing him to Putin: "At some point we will no longer be any different from Russia, where everything depends on the whim of one man".

Then it was the turn of former chocolate magnate and former president Poroshenko who has presented himself as a supporter of Zaluzhny. Zelensky then decided to stop Poroshenko at the border when he was about to travel abroad on a speaking tour. Poroshenko described these actions as "anti-Ukrainian sabotage".

Pointless carnage

On 24 November, the head of Zelensky's parliamentary faction Arakhamia said in an interview that in March 2022 there had been a Russian offer at peace talks, which would have meant withdrawal to pre-February 2022 borders in exchange for Ukraine remaining neutral. He added that one of the reasons the proposal was rejected was Boris Johnson's urgent visit to Kyiv in which he insisted Ukraine should reject any deal, continue to fight and that the West would guarantee victory. Of course, the role of Boris at the time was known and we commented on it.

The significance of Arakhamia's statement now should be seen as an attempt to shift the blame for the disastrous course of the war onto western imperialism's shoulders: "You twisted our arm so that we would continue to fight, but we failed to provide us the means to do so". The other implication of this is clear for everyone to see: the carnage and bloodshed of the last 20 months have been in vain. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian (and Russian) sons of working-class parents were sacrificed at the altar of a proxy war that NATO cannot win.

On the same day as Arakhamia's interview, an article in the German sensationalist paper *Bild* "revealed" a secret plan concocted by German chancellor Scholz and US president Biden to squeeze Ukraine in order to force Zelensky into negotiations with Putin. The gist of the article was: "Ukraine will continue to be supplied with new weapons, but in the quality and quantity that is sufficient to roughly hold the current front, but not to win nor advance". "President Zelensky will not be put under verbal pressure to negotiate by either Olaf Scholz or Joe Biden, but should 'come to the realisation himself' that a military victory against Russia is impossible and therefore move towards negotiations."

Of course, *Bild* should be taken with a pinch of salt, but the article is based on facts. The Ukraine war is becoming a very expensive proposition for the main NATO countries, particularly when they have nothing



Trump on the path to victory again?

DONALD TRUMP claimed his first victory on the path to the 2024 Presidential Election at the start of the year, winning by a landslide in the Iowa Caucuses.

In the same week, pollsters pronounced Joe Biden the most unpopular President ever – more hated even than his polarising predecessor. Not a few Democrat party insiders will be wringing their hands now, as their geriatric leader alienates anyone with a shred of humani-

ty over his full backing of Israeli genocide.

Despite the lawsuits and criminal charges against Trump, his campaign only gathers momentum. The US ruling class don't seem to understand that all they throw at him just makes him more popular.

Americans are set for a re-run of the 2020 election this year, and while it may have the same outcome as back then, the potential for a repeat of 2016 is huge.



Swedish workers declare war on Elon Musk and Tesla

FECKLESS BILLIONAIRE Elon Musk faces an industrial nightmare as workers at his Swedish factory go on strike.

Musk has faced down unionisation efforts before, typically victimising or firing those who demand better pay, conditions and safety.

Now, however, he confronts the combined might of thousands of Swedish workers who are taking

secondary action to prevent union-busting at Tesla. This action threatens to spread to Norway and Denmark, and has the potential to spark an international union struggle.

Musk is every bit the fat-cat or robber-baron, being a figure of derision across the world, especially on his own social media platform, X. Posting through the pain, he calls the situation “insane”.



to show for it and no prospects of any advance on the field of battle. In the US, Biden is heading towards an election and is mired in constant wrangling with the Republicans over military aid for Ukraine. At the time of writing it is not clear that he will manage to pass the latest multi-billion dollar tranche.

The situation is similar in Germany, where Scholz is coming up against serious budgetary constraints and the far right AfD is growing in the polls. The EU itself is deeply divided over continued support for the war in Ukraine. At the time of writing Hungarian president Orbán is blocking the approval of a €50 billion aid package which is necessary to maintain the functioning of the Ukrainian state. To this we have to add the election of Fico in Slovakia and the victory of the far right in the Dutch elections. The mood is summarised in the declarations of an EU official speaking on condition of anonymity: “How much more money will we pour into this black hole?”

And it is not just a question of money. The West is unable to manufacture shells and military equipment fast enough to meet the needs of the war. For months now, the US and its allies have been sending weapons to Ukraine from their own stockpiles. NATO Admiral Rob Bauer at the Warsaw Security Forum last month warned: “The bottom of the barrel is now visible.”

On the other side of the equation we have Russia, which has been able to circumvent western sanctions and its economy is expected to grow by 3.5 percent this year. At the same time it has outpaced the West in the production of shells and other military equipment, both high and low-tech.

This has allowed it to reverse the situation at the front. It is no longer the case that Russia is defending and Ukraine attacking, but rather, in several sections of the frontline Ukraine has started to fortify (copying Russian tactics), while Russia is on the offensive.

Ukrainian morale

To this we have to add the impact of a prolonged war of attrition on Ukrainian morale. This is re-

vealed in the expansion of the draft as well as a myriad of recent incidents in which the police have raided gyms and saunas looking for men of military age to be forcibly sent to the front.

According to the BBC, 650,000 conscription-age men have left Ukraine legally or illegally. The mood is clearly starting to change. An article in the Washington Post stated that “interviews with draft-age Ukrainians suggest that many are less than eager to fight for a military and national government that is viewed as rife with corruption and incompetence.”

By examining history, we know that wars often lead to revolutions and that this is particularly the case in defeated countries. Long gone are the days of patriotic fervour and national defence. Increasingly, Ukrainians will start to ask themselves whether they have not been sacrificed at the altar of the interest of US imperialism in its conflict with Russia.

Of course, what Russia offered in the spring of 2022 – a withdrawal to pre-February 2022 borders in exchange for Ukrainian neutrality – is no longer on offer. Russia will keep what it has gained and is aiming to advance even further. At his televised end of year press conference, as we stated at the beginning, Putin was clear: “peace will come when our aims are achieved”. He also made a point of saying that “Odessa is a Russian city”.

Putin might not be able to increase the rate of mobilisation, but the troops he has at his disposal are enough to achieve his aims as long as he is able to supply them. He is counting that in the war of attrition, time is on his side. So far, facts are proving him right. There have been protests in Russia by mothers and wives of soldiers who were mobilised in September 2022, demanding that they should be allowed to return home after over a year of fighting. But as long as the economy is recovering and the war seems to be going his way, he can count on popular support and acquiescence.

NATO humiliated

From an international point of view, what is at stake is a humiliat-

ing defeat for NATO. Facts are stubborn things. What we have in Ukraine in relation to the spring/summer counter-offensive is a NATO armed, supplied and trained army unable to overcome Russian fortifications. More than that, the threat is now that of a collapse of the Ukrainian frontline and a further Russian advance. The West is facing another Afghanistan-style humiliation.

This is a measure of the relative decline of US imperialism on the world scene. This is the most powerful and reactionary imperialist country on the planet, whose military spending equals that of the next ten top countries combined. And yet, it is unable to decisively impose its will in any region of the world. The crisis of capitalism makes the world a much more turbulent place. Being its main policeman is an increasingly complex job, with trouble flaring everywhere and other regional powers, sensing weakness, ganging up to defy the top boss.

The escalation of Israel's aggression against the Palestinians, so close in time to the war in Ukraine, has also revealed the full extent of the West's hypocrisy when it comes to “violation of international law”, “war crimes”, etc. When these are committed by our enemies, they are shouted from the rooftops, exaggerated, or directly invented, in order to justify our reactionary imperialist war aims. When they are committed by our allies, they are then explained away in the name of the “right to self-defence”.

The main victims in this whole affair are the working people of Ukraine first and foremost. From the very beginning the spokespersons of US imperialism said it clearly: we will fight this war in our interest (to weaken rival Russian imperialism) until the last drop... of Ukrainian blood. Now that the war is not going their way, they are abandoning the Ukrainians to their fate, forcing them into what will be a detrimental agreement with their aggressive imperialist neighbour. There is a lesson here for ‘small’ nations everywhere: they are just used by the big powers as small change, to justify their actions and then discarded when they are no longer useful or have become too expensive.

From the beginning of the conflict, revolutionary communists have stood firm on the principle that the main enemy of the working class is at home. The Russian revolutionary Marxists opposed Putin's reactionary invasion of Ukraine, motivated not by “the defence of Russian speakers” nor the “denazification of Ukraine”, but rather by the national security interests of the Russian ruling class. Revolutionary Marxists in the West denounced first and foremost ‘our own’ imperialist ruling class, the most reactionary force on the planet. •

► Hands Off Yemen! (back page)

It's estimated that the average improvised Houthi drone costs about \$2,000 to construct. But each guided missile that the US Navy launches to take out a single drone costs about \$2 million a piece. And their supply of such missiles is by no means inexhaustible.

“It's a remarkably weak strategic response and an unaffordable calculus,” Forbes magazine complained back in December, “But [it] tells us a lot about the state of American military and political leadership and America's waning power.”

The western imperialists had to do something to save face, and this prestige-saving exercise is what they came up with.

Imperialist insanity

The situation is showing up the imperialists. A handful of poorly-armed rebels are holding up shipping in a sea which is used to transport 15 percent of the world's traffic. Major shipping companies and oil companies including BP have already begun diverting traffic around the Cape of Good Hope, adding weeks to transport time and driving up costs.

This will add to inflationary pressures in the world economy, and many companies are facing severe disruption. Tesla has announced that it will have to suspend manufacturing vehicles at its German plant as a result of a shortage of components that usually arrive via this trade route.

All this comes at a time of record low water levels in the Panama Canal, disrupting sea trade in another major economic artery, and as capitalism faces powerful economic headwinds that threaten to push the world into recession.

But the intervention of the imperialists, who are trying to save face whilst sending a warning to keep out of Israel's war and keep shipping lanes clear, will not stabilise the situation. Instead, they are pouring petrol onto the flames.

Oil prices have already spiked a further two percent since last night's bombing. And above all,

they are pouring petrol onto burning anger of millions of people across the region, where many regimes are already teetering on the edge.

So we have the spectacle of Anthony Blinken running around the Middle East like a headless chicken trying to soothe Arab leaders and evade an escalation, while the senile man in the White House undoing these efforts by ordering the bombing of Houthis, who alone in the region have taken action against Israel.

How to explain this? Are the US imperialists insane? Perhaps, but there is a saying: a man at the edge of a cliff does not reason. The present situation is beyond their control and is daily becoming more uncontrollable. Whatever they do, there is no sane solution. They want to avoid an escalation, that is true. But doing nothing is also not an option, as it will only underline their present weakness.

Responsibility for the war in Gaza, the destabilisation of the Middle East and the inevitable retaliations, the disruption of sea trade – the cost of which will be loaded onto the shoulders of the poor in the form of higher prices – all this must be placed on the shoulders of the Israeli ruling class and above all the western imperialists.

They will not be brought to order by ICJ or ICC rulings, nor by the UN, nor by peaceful protests in major capitals. And despite the fact that Biden and Sunak bypassed Congress and Parliament, we've no doubt that had they granted them that courtesy, the politicians of the ruling class would only have rubber stamped their imperialist designs.

The only true friends that the Palestinian and Yemeni people have against imperialism are the billions of oppressed and working-class people of the world. To stop the war on Gaza, to free Palestine, and to prevent the imperialists dragging the region to hell, we must overthrow imperialism. Only socialist revolution can deliver us from all this. We say:

Hands off Yemen!

Free Palestine!

From Gaza to London to Washington: Intifada until victory! Revolution until victory!



REVOLUTION



Revolution Scotland   

International Marxist Tendency

'The great only appear great because we are on our knees; Let us Rise'

'Workers of the World, Unite!'

HANDS OFF YEMEN!



The USA, UK and other imperialists have joined the war against Palestine, launching air strikes against Yemen in order to protect Israel and the profit margins of international shipping companies. The working class of the world condemns this reckless escalation and stands with Palestine, Yemen and the struggle against imperialist war!

Ben Curry
— marxist.com

The hands of the western imperialists are drenched with the blood of the Gazan people, but up until now they could hide behind the fact that whilst, yes, they may have supplied the guns, the bombs, the money and the political cover for the slaughter, they didn't directly pull the trigger. No, they always insisted the slaughter should be carried out with "moderation", with "proportionate force". Now in Yemen, they have directly intervened, recklessly escalating the conflict in the region. We say: hands off Yemen! Down with the imperialist murderers!

We must grant the western imperialists this much: they have been

quite transparent about why they have intervened.

"In accordance with the inherent right of individual and collective self-defence," they pompously declared in a joint statement after the bombing, "these precision strikes were intended to disrupt and degrade the capabilities the Houthis use to threaten global trade and the lives of international mariners in one of the world's most critical waterways."

Biden underlined that he would not hesitate to take further measures to protect "the free flow of international commerce".

"Whatever you think of the Houthis' cause and their justification," UK Armed Forces Minister James Heappey stated, "we cannot allow them to seek to choke off global trade as a ransom to achieve whatever their political and diplo-

matic aims are."

So whilst Gazans add up their dead, and we patiently await the verdict of the ICJ on whether they are the victims of genocide or mere mass murder, a far graver threat to the Free World must be confronted: the sacred right of shipping and oil companies to trade and make profit.

Next to the interests of profit, what right does an impoverished people have to retaliate to the Gaza slaughter by firing improvised devices at Israeli and Israel-bound ships in the Red Sea? In carrying out their righteous duty, the UK government has appealed to... "international law"!

Since 2015, the Yemeni people have been subjected to mass slaughter by a Saudi-led coalition, backed and armed by the US, Britain and the West, which has seen 150,000 killed by western supplied munitions and hundreds of thousands more killed by hunger and disease as a result. The story of the war against the Houthi rebels is one long string of war crimes: man-made famine, weddings, funerals and even school buses bombed, entire families wiped out.

Now the western imperialists appeal to "international law" to renew their bombardment of Yemen in order to give a warning against

interfering with Israel's ongoing operations and to protect profit and trade, as they state openly. The hypocrisy is enough to make you choke.

A piece of bloody theatre

On a strategic level, it is hard to imagine that any thought went into this reckless bombardment, which pushes the region even closer towards an abyss.

The imperialists claim in their statement on the attacks that their aim was "to disrupt and degrade the capabilities" of the Houthis, who have been targeting vessels in the Red Sea since November. But if that is the case, why was the attack preceded by government press statements announcing the bombing with a drum roll?

"Watch this space," Grant Schapps told the press two days before the bombs dropped. "We're going to do what we have to do to counter these threats," the White House national security spokesman told newspapers a few hours before the attack - plenty of time for the Houthis to securely hide their materiel.

The whole thing was a piece of theatre to mask the impotence of the imperialists - a very expensive and risky piece of theatre at that. It isn't going to solve the problems that the

imperialists have got themselves into. In fact, it has the potential to make them a lot worse.

The bombing of a few sites across Yemen won't have the slightest impact on the capability of the Houthis. Years of fierce bombardment by the Saudis failed to dislodge the Houthis. Even Israel's aerial bombardment and land invasion of the tiny enclave of Gaza has merely dented Hamas and is doomed to failure.

Only a full land invasion could break the Houthis' capabilities, and US imperialism and its allies, after the disasters in Iraq and Afghanistan, are in no mood for that. But the US deterrence strategy so far has been a hopeless failure too. True, US warships have been stationed in the region to 'protect' trade vessels, but this has only shown up the impotence of the world's mightiest navy.

The Houthis are not operating with equipment stationed at a handful of high-tech facilities that can be quickly 'taken out'. They are using cheap, remotely-controlled, unmanned boats packed with IEDs, and drones made up of commercially-accessible parts that can be hidden without much effort, and quickly and cheaply replaced.

... continues pg.11 ►