

New calls for peace as Israel prepares Rafah onslaught

by our Arab Affairs
correspondent

People's China has again called for an immediate end to Israeli aggression in Gaza as Palestinian commandos keep up the fight in the streets and alleyways of the beleaguered Gaza Strip while other resistance units take on the Israeli troops and settler gunmen who are spreading terror across the West Bank in a renewed Zionist effort to drive the Palestinians out and steal their land, Israeli provocations in the north are being met by a hail of missiles and flying bombs from the Lebanese resistance while the Houthi Yemeni government continue to defy the imperialists by stepping up their attacks on Israeli-affiliated-ships and others linked to Anglo-American imperialism.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres also renewed his call for peace saying that "even though Ramadan has begun, the killing, bombing and bloodshed continue in Gaza... my strongest appeal today is to honour the spirit of Ramadan by silencing the guns and removing all obstacles to ensure the delivery of lifesaving aid at the speed and massive scale required". All remaining Israeli hostages or prisoners taken by Hamas must be released immediately too, the UN chief said, noting that the "catastrophic Israeli onslaught in Gaza" is now in its sixth month.

The escalation of the fighting comes as Israel prepares to further expand its operations in Gaza by launching an offensive in the southernmost area of Rafah, where more than one million Palestinians are taking shelter. But instead of pressuring Israel to accept a permanent ceasefire, the Americans are now preparing to support the Israeli war effort under a suspicious plan to deliver aid via the sea without coordinating it with local Palestinian administration or the United Nations.

In Beijing, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman said that "the current round of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has lasted for

more than five months, exceeding the duration of all Middle East wars except the first one, resulting in a particularly high number of deaths, especially among civilians, surpassing all previous Middle East conflicts". Wang Wenbin said "the killing of Gazan civilians must stop, the injustice toward the Palestinian people must be corrected, and the double standards in dealing with human rights and international humanitarian law must be abandoned. The longer the flames in Gaza flare up, the more humanity is scourged by conscience, the more the cornerstone of justice is eroded". The international community must act urgently to set the immediate cease-fire as an overwhelming priority and the humanitarian aid in Gaza as a pressing moral responsibility Wang said.

Joe Biden, the chief American warlord, had talked up the prospects of a cease-fire in time for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. But all the Americans and their Israeli pawns were interested in was a "pause" in the fighting to allow for a prisoner exchange. A top Hamas political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, said that Hamas wanted an agreement that would end the war, guarantee the withdrawal of Israeli forces

from Gaza, return displaced Palestinians to their homes and provide for the humanitarian needs of Gazans. But all Israel wanted was "to get its prisoners back and then resume the war on our people".

Late last week, the Americans said they would build a pier in the Strip to bring aid to civilians in Gaza, with relief groups warning of famine but many suspect this is just an imperialist ruse to justify stationing American troops

in the Strip to support the continued Zionist occupation. Hamas says the people of Gaza would have had access to thousands of tons of aid if the USA had done enough to pressure Israel to open border crossings into the territory. But US imperialists have continuously supported Israel's brutal war on Gaza by vetoing United Nations resolutions seeking an end to the conflict that could allow the delivery of aid into the Gaza Strip.

FUND

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Another brick in the wall

Moves to curb democratic protests and solidarity movements were announced this week under new government definitions of “extremism” that will be used to blacklist groups the ruling class deem to be seeking to undermine what they call Britain’s “liberal democracy”.

Some Tory grandees are having second thoughts about the wisdom of all of this. And even the head of the Church of England has doubts. The Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, says that the new definition “not only inadvertently threatens freedom of speech, but also the right to worship and peaceful protest, things that have been hard won and form the fabric of a civilised society. Crucially, it risks disproportionately targeting Muslim communities, who are already experiencing rising levels of hate and abuse”.

The new rules will, of course, not affect the Zionists or the racists who see the Tory party as their natural home following the collapse of the BNP and the National Front. What they will do is prevent public bodies from providing platforms for those spreading “hateful anti-British” ideas that “poison community life”. Though the definition will have no effect on the existing criminal law as it only applies to the operations of government itself, its intention is clearly to isolate and marginalise the massive Palestinian solidarity movement and climate change campaigns that have swept the streets and challenged the bourgeois consensus in recent years.

The Sunak government would dearly like to ban the demonstrations outright but it simply doesn’t have the public support to do so. So now it is stepping up the harassment of demonstrators and smearing the organisers as merchants of hate. But who believes their lies these days?

London hasn’t become a “no-go” area for Jews. In fact many members of the Jewish community have joined the massive Palestinian solidarity marches that have rocked London over the past five months and have all ended peacefully – despite the dire predictions of “mob rule” in the Tory media.

Hundreds of thousands of people have supported the recent cycle of demonstrations calling for a ceasefire in Gaza. Millions more support the demand for justice for the Palestinian Arabs and an end to fighting in the Gaza Strip. This is an attack on democracy, not a defence of it. The right to protest must be defended.

Keep up the fight

International efforts to stop the fighting in Gaza have come to nothing in recent weeks. The Palestinian resistance have rejected the Americans’ worthless Ramadan cease-fire “pause” that would clearly not have led to a lasting truce given Israel’s declared aim to re-occupy the Strip and wipe Hamas off the face of the earth. The Palestinians want a permanent cease-fire, the total withdrawal of all Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and internationally guaranteed pledges to speedily work towards the establishment of the independent Palestinian state that the imperialists accept when they talk about a “two-state” solution.

Air-drops and floating piers aren’t going to stave off starvation in Gaza. If the Americans really want to help they should just tell the Israelis to allow food and medical convoys cross their border into the enclave. If the Americans really want to see the release of the Israelis in Palestinian captivity they should accept the Palestinian offer of a prisoner exchange. If the Americans really want to see an end to the fighting they should stop vetoing truce proposals at the United Nations that have the support of all the other members of the Security Council as well as virtually all the countries in the entire world.

Warmongers condemn Pope’s peace call

by Dimitri Babich

Pope Francis has come under fire from staunchly Catholic Poland for urging Ukraine to seek peace with Russia. His recent call for peace talks between Russia and Ukraine under the “white flag” was met with reproach and insults from Western politicians – especially in Germany and Poland.

The Pontiff made his comments in an interview with journalist Lorenzo Buscella for Swiss RSI TV, recorded in February but only broadcast last week. Buscella asked the Argentine head of the Roman Catholic church for his view on calls for peace talks between Ukraine and Russia – which Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky has banned by decree.

“This is the question of vision. I think that the strongest is the one that looks at the situation soberly,” said the Pope. “The one that thinks about the plight of people and who has the courage to put out the white flag and to negotiate”.

“The word ‘to negotiate’ is a courageous word. When you see that you are being overwhelmed militarily, that the situation is developing in an unfavourable way for you, then you should have the courage to negotiate,” the Pope continued. “You should not be ashamed of negotiating, because otherwise how many more dead are you going to have? Negotiate and look for an intermediary,” he added, naming Turkey as one candidate. He stressed that Zelensky should “feel ashamed” if he failed to seek peace and “the situation gets worse!”

In the interview, in Italian and aimed at Swiss Catholics, the Pope confirmed his readiness to step in as a mediator between the warring parties under the authority of the Holy See in Rome.

Some of the strongest criticism of the Pope’s comments came from Ukrainian foreign minister Dmitry Kuleba, who the Pope had encouraged to make the first step towards peace.

“Our flag is yellow and blue. Under this flag we live, die and

win. We will never raise any other flags,” Kuleba said. He was echoed by Latvian foreign minister Edgars Rinkevics who said “one does not capitulate to evil, one fights against it and wins”.

Kuleba also compared Francis’ words to the Church’s stance during Adolf Hitler’s rule in Germany, when Pope Pius XII kept silent about many Nazi crimes for fear of anti-Catholic repression by the Third Reich.

“We remember the Vatican’s ‘white flag’ strategy in the first half of the twentieth century. I would insist on the Vatican not repeating its past mistakes,” Kuleba said.

German officials went further, dismissing the peace efforts of both the Catholic and Orthodox churches and insisting that Kiev fight on until victory. “As a Catholic woman, I am ashamed by the omissions and weaknesses [in the Pope’s statement]” liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) defence spokeswoman Marie-Agnes Strack-Zimmermann told the Tagesspiegel daily. “Why, in God’s name, isn’t Pope Francis criticising the Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill for inciting hatred against the Ukrainian people?”

“This is a deceitful and slanderous statement from a German politician, which is unjust both to the Pope and to Patriarch Kirill and which shows how hostile the modern Western political elite is to Christianity,” says Vakhtang Kipshidze, the deputy head of the Russian Orthodox Church’s Synod Commission on Relations with Society and Media. “The Russian Patriarch never incited any hatred against Ukrainians”.

“As for the Pope, I think his words should not be interpreted as an anti-Ukrainian statement” Kipshidze said. “It was a call for peace, which is unacceptable for Western politicians, because they insist on Ukraine’s victory at all costs”.

Polish foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski echoed Strack-Zimmermann’s comments, despite Poland’s reputation as a staunchly-Catholic nation. “How about, for balance, encouraging Putin to have the courage to with-

draw his army from Ukraine? Peace would immediately ensue without the need for negotiations,” Sikorski said.

Another leader of Poland’s ruling Civic Coalition, Grzegorz Schetyna, was even harsher.

“The Pope is pro-Russian. His statement is evidence of his total ignorance on the subject of European politics,” he said.

“I think this is a typical approach of Western politicians now,” Kipshidze said. “They dismiss the opinions of religious leaders without any respect, if these leaders’ position does not suit the Western agenda. Let me remind you that just recently Western politicians and media accused our Patriarch Kirill of being belligerent simply because he did not call for Russia’s surrender and gave spiritual solace to Russia’s soldiers, who are often sacrificing their lives now.”

“When Pope Francis called for a step towards peace from the side of Ukraine and the West, those same politicians and media outlets in the West lashed out against him — against the head of the Catholic church,” he underlined.

Pope Francis’ peace proposal was neither a slip of the tongue nor an uninformed thought voiced aloud. “In my opinion, Pope Francis, who had been an Argentinian bishop before being elected Pope in 2013, represents the views of the Global South on the Ukrainian conflict,” Kipshidze said. “He wants negotiations and some kind of a peace of the brave, that would take into account the interests of all people living in Ukraine’s and Russia’s territories,” Kipshidze said.

Kipshidze said it was clear that such a peace is unacceptable to the regime in Kiev and for its Western sponsors, who want their Ukrainian proxies to win by any means. This is a very un-Christian approach, but typical for the modern EU, Kipshidze said. Even those parties in the EU which still have the word ‘Christian’ in their names stopped defending the Christian values of peace and family long ago.

Sputnik

Workers' Notes

For decades children have been warned that they would get square eyes if they watched too much television. Today similar problems come from playing computer games, but making them is even worse. In December the Chinese Government announced plans to address this by imposing severe restrictions on the time and money allowed to be spent on computer games. This announcement caused a huge fall in the share prices of online gaming companies across the globe. Two years earlier the Chinese ruled that under-18 year olds would only be allowed to play for an hour on Fridays, weekends and holidays, but the new rules are much stricter in that they will ban entirely some games and force publishers to have processing servers and storage data kept in China if they want Chinese customers. In passing it is worth noting that the Chinese have also banned the sort of games which the British Army uses in recruitment as it thinks they are useful in instilling the shoot-and-kill reflexes which will come in handy for the next imperialistic adventure.

Workers Zapped

by New Worker correspondent

These actions may or may not be responsible for the fact that Sony, one of the giants in the online gaming business is laying off 900 workers, an eight per cent cut which involves the complete closure of its London operations.

As is normal in this case the 900 were sent off with a cheery message “while these are challenging times, it is not indicative of a lack of strength of our company, our brand,

or our industry. Our goal is to remain agile and adaptable and to continue to focus on delivering the best gaming experiences possible now and in the future”.

Earlier Sony’s rival, Microsoft, cut 2,000 staff after it bought out the Activision Blizzard games company. Riot Games who made the League of Legends battle game is getting rid of eleven per cent of its staff. The relative failure of a single game is often followed by redundancies. Even the mighty Amazon cut 180 jobs for this reason.

Late last month another games maker, Guildford-based Supermassive Games announced it is planning to lay off 90 workers, about a quarter of its workforce. We ought to be grateful the company does so only after “much deliberation and with deep regret, we are therefore undertaking a reorganisation of Supermassive Games. As a result, we are entering into a period of consultation, which we anticipate will result in the loss of some of our colleagues”.

The global industry lost 10,000 jobs last year, with another 8,000 in January and February alone. Over 30 studios have vanished into cyberspace.

These cuts are coming at a time when the industry is globally expanding. In particular Sony’s cuts come at a time when its Playstation 5 console has sold 50 million units, three times more than its nearest rival, the X Box X/S. There are 3.24 billion gamers on this planet who last year spent £365.5 billion on their ever expanding hobby.

Some claim that as the industry expanded too rapidly during the pandemic it took on too many workers in an effort to keep up with the increased demand from people stuck indoors and this is now being reversed.

It is now a business far from its origins when spotty teenagers bashed away on heavy desktop computers in their bedrooms. While they could reap the rewards of their labour by helping to develop a popular game, nowadays the rewards go to CEOs and hedge funds.

The 1993 video game Doom was made by two developers, but the latest successful game Spiderman 2 cost \$300 million to develop which means it needs to sell seven million copies in a fickle market simply to break even. The increasingly fancy graphics demanded by people shooting dragons and villains demand big bucks budgets and massive teams.

A Japanese veteran of the business, Katsuhiro Harada, laments that twenty years ago, “Development was going on at a much faster pace, with much lower labour costs than now. Now it is completely different. Everything has become huge, all costs have skyrocketed, and it takes a lot longer” In addition “there are more and more self-proclaimed game industry people and executives who are not creators, do not even have development experience”. Surprise, surprise, but that is how capitalism works.

Some veterans say the present situation is similar to the video game crash of 1983 when the industry crashed under the weight of countless amateurish efforts putting people off. Microsoft and Sony say the present business needs to be reformed, which seems to mean redundancies and outsourcing to smaller contractors who can be more easily dispensed with when demand is low. It is good to report that this has not always been successful as in the case of American companies finding that Swedish workers kept gentlemen’s hours and had unions to protect them.

The Crunch

One feature of working in the games industry is the “Crunch” which is a trendy term for very long hours of usually unpaid overtime to meet tight deadlines. Two years ago the second

UK Games Industry Census, conducted by University of Sheffield researchers surveyed 3,600 workers. This naturally showed a great increase in working from home, and this was something they wanted to keep.

Gaming is one of these businesses where workers enjoy the creative work involved, which is probably more exciting than being an accountant. However such youthful enthusiasm is easily exploited by bosses who often do not need to offer large salaries to attract workers. The 2022 Census showed that 87 per cent enjoyed their job and the company they worked for.

It is clearly a boys’ industry having a 70-30 male to female ratio, with over 60 per cent under 35. The second census reported an increase, from 31 to 38 per cent, of the number of workers reporting they suffered from anxiety, depression or both. The “normal” figure for wider society is 17 to 18 per cent, so clearly the industry generates such problems.

Eighteen per cent of the employees are neuro-divergent, a proportion much higher than in the general population. While the CEO of the industry’s trade body United Kingdom Interactive Entertainment, Jo Twist, boasts about “building an equal, diverse and inclusive sector” it is worth remembering that people with such conditions can be easier to exploit. For instance autistic people who have found security in one organisation can be more easily forced to work longer hours than someone who could easily walk away into another job.

Excessive unpaid hours are the norm in the industry, especially in the months before and after the launch of a game. Sometimes these periods are known as “death marches”. They are definitely not “a rite of passage” as some claim. While the gaming companies insist that the “crunch” is voluntary, it is clear that a refusal to do so results in being shown the door.

The larger companies are particularly demanding. The American magazine, the Jacobin, reported that workers are having heart attacks at their desk as a result of a 75 hour week in busy periods and that a 50 hour week was the norm at the best of times. The only alternative was to leave, but the worker reporting this said that this was paradise com-

pared to rival companies.

A Rocky Road

The lack of a union presence in the business is abundantly clear from the ongoing dispute at the American-owned Rockstar Games who have demanded that their British staff return to the office five days a week after Management withdrew the right to work from home.

This demand came a year after 170 staff objected to mandatory three-day office work. This was a protest by an independent street union, the IWGB Game Workers union, who are organising a petition, which they say is “one of the biggest cases of union action in the gaming industry”.

That such a modest action, about a comparatively small matter should be seen as a great advance for trade unionism demonstrates just how weak the unions are in what is a major consumer industry. Sadly many 21st century businesses have a Victorian Master and Servant approach to industrial relations.

IWGB complains that Rockstar have reneged on promises made when imposing the three days in the office rule.

Rockstar workers say the pandemic had demonstrated the benefits of working from home and said a return to the office would hit disabled workers particularly hard, along with those with caring responsibilities. In addition some had moved further away from the studios and will now have to endure longer journeys to work.

Rockstar are pulling the plug on remote working technology claiming security concerns and reduced productivity as the reason for the decision but they have not provided their employees with any supporting evidence.

One anonymous Rockstar worker complained that “working from home has been a lifeline for many of us at Rockstar, allowing us to balance care responsibilities, manage disabilities, and relocate as we need. Now,

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Rockstar is snatching away that lifeline without a second thought for the workers who'll be impacted most. After so many broken promises we now fear management may even be paving the way for a return to toxic 'crunch' practices".

Austin Kelmore, the IWGB Game Workers Chair added that "the workers in the IWGB Game Workers Union at Rockstar are pushing for transparency over pay and promotions, a healthy and inclusive workplace culture, and work life balance centred around what each worker needs. It is unacceptable that the Rockstar leadership have gone back on their word time and time again and have ignored the workers' requests for basic working conditions".

He added hopefully that "workers across the industry are done with letting executives make reckless and harmful decisions and the Rockstar workers are showing us the start of what's to come if they're continually ignored. There's no better time than now to join our union and push for this to be the healthy and sustainable games industry we know it can be". Let's

hope so.

There have been some efforts at organising gaming workers on the other side of the Atlantic and elsewhere. These tend to be reactive, coming after scandals involving cases of abuse, sexism, lay-offs, and overwork.

In June last year workers at Sega's California headquarters organised – setting up a Communications Workers of America branch after a 91-26 vote in favour. Last October more than 100 developers at the Avalanche Studio Group in Stockholm set up a union after some brutal lay-offs. Last December 300 Quality Assurance workers at Maryland based ZeniMax Media also announced they were setting up a union.

Only last Friday 600 workers from Activision's Q&A team joined the Communication Workers of America, which is now the largest game developer union in North America, so there is hope for what will be a long hard battle.

Open Wide

While we are on the subject of new union branches we note the formation of one for dental nurses at Manchester last weekend. This was formed

by Community which also represents steelworkers and knitwear workers amongst others.

Community General Secretary Roy Rickhuss, a CBE no less said "we know there are increased pressures on dental nurses, so it's really important that they have as many people fighting in their corner as possible. We are delighted to have been approached by dental nurses, having seen our track record of supporting and getting results for our members, to create a dental nurses' sector within Community. We look forward to standing with dental nurses across the UK and becoming a strong voice for the sector – something these workers need and deserve".

There are already plenty of NHS unions, but many dental nurses are employed in private practices so this development is to be welcomed, even if Community's record of industrial militancy leaves something to be desired. However the smaller specialist unions often offer occupational expertise lacking in larger unions.

Celie Brookes, a dental nurse and one of those involved in the new branch said "Dental Nurses have been fac-

ing significant issues for some time ... It's impossible not to see these challenges laid bare when people are pulling their teeth out with pliers because they cannot get into an NHS Dentist". One wonders what their boss' trade union, the British Dental Association thinks of this. It is likely the new union will have a fight on its hands if it tries to organise the larger private health care providers such as Bupa.

In Academia also...

by New Worker correspondent

At Cambridge University, where Isaac Newton cleverly worked out that the Earth was created in 3998 BC, university workers are taking industrial action in the hope of getting a decent pay rise to meet the cost of living in a city notable as much for its excessive housing costs as its learning.

Last week's walk-out was by about 450 cleaners, librarians, museum staff and clerical workers. Some buildings closed entirely and library and museum services were greatly

reduced.

Their union, Unite, points out that the university is loaded, having over six billion pounds-worth of cash and investments. This figure excludes the value of the college wine cellars, so the university can easily afford the £75 million which would meet the demand for a £5,000 "Cambridge weighting" cost of living increase, which would allow them to live in the city. Staff have firmly rejected a pay increase of between five and six per cent, which was supposed to have been paid last August.

Sharon Graham, the union's general secretary, said "Cambridge University is one of the richest education institutions in the UK and has billions of pounds at its disposal. Yet rather than help its lowest paid workers with the cost of living in one of the most expensive cities in the UK it is fiddling while Rome burns. It pleas of poverty have been exposed as being entirely hollow".

Ian Maidlow, a regional officer added that "our members do vital work for the university and keep essential services for students and academics up and running. The resulting disruption to the smooth running of the university is a direct consequence of management's intransigence in making a decent pay offer".

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

12th March 2004

FIVE BRITONS who had been held by the United States at the notorious Camp Delta in Guantánamo Bay for two years have now been released by the Americans into British custody with the admission that they are "not much of a terrorist threat"

But four other Britons remain, among the 650 odd other prisoners in the US-occupied corner of the island of Cuba, waiting an uncertain fate.

The USA claims that each of these four had attended Al-Qaeda terrorist training camps and are too dangerous to release, though not a shred of credible evidence has been

produced.

The USA is preparing military tribunals for some of the remaining Camp Delta inmates. But none of these have been allowed access to independent lawyers and after two years incarceration with no contact with the outside world, their mental health is in question.

No evidence has been produced apart from alleged confessions that may have been extracted by torture.

Courts throughout history and throughout the world recognise that confessions and information obtained in this way are useless. Prisoners in pain, confused terrified will say anything their captors wish to hear to escape.

Yet the US authorities are threatening some with the death penalty on the basis of such evidence. There is no question this would be cold-blooded murder.

The four Britons who remain in Guantánamo are Richard Belmar, Martin Mubanga, Feroz Abbasi and Moazzam Begg. The Americans

admit the first two are "medium risk" and could be eligible later for release to Britain.

But there are very grave concerns for the future of Abbasi and Begg. A US military psychiatrist last year diagnosed Abbasi with depression. His lawyer Louise Christian, said then: "The fear is he's been forced into some confession in the absence of a lawyer or just said anything in the hope of getting out of there."

here are fears that some allegations may have come from James Ujaama, an American Muslim accused of founding a terrorist training camp but who had all major charges against him dropped in exchange for information.

Begg's family fear that's some "confession" has been extracted under duress.

Meanwhile one of the five returnees was released immediately. The other four were taken straight to Paddington Green police station for questioning by British military intelligence police.

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Hamas: We will definitely win!

In January Pravda.Ru special correspondent Daria Aslamova spoke with one of the leaders of Hamas movement who was in Moscow for talks with the Russian leadership and other Palestinian resistance movements. During the interview Dr Musa Abu Marzouk shared his views on the future of the Gaza Strip and why the Palestinians cannot lose this war.

Good afternoon, Dr Abu Marzouk. First of all, how can we introduce you to our readers? They say about you that you are one of the main ideologists of Hamas, one of the leaders of Hamas. They also call you the “informal minister of foreign affairs.” Is that so?

Indeed, I am one of the founders of the Hamas movement. I have been active throughout the entire time and also as the head of Hamas even after the developments in Gaza and on the West Bank. And my activity is international relations. Maybe it gives me the right to be known as a politician. But, in fact, I am an engineer by training. I received my bachelor's degree in Egypt and my doctorate in the USA.

This is not your first time in Moscow. As far as I know, you have been here before. What is the purpose of your visit to Moscow? What are you planning to do?

This visit is, in fact, an ordinary visit, since our relations with Russia are developing. I visit Russia at least twice a year. But this time it has special significance, because we are now at war, especially against the backdrop of Israeli aggression. Such a number of victims, genocide committed by Israel, so many civilian casualties in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, we need to talk with our colleagues and with the Russian leadership. We discussed many issues related to our region. Since Russia has a relationship with all



Palestinian representatives, we discussed the issue of a Palestinian truce.

Do you mean with Fatah?

With Fatah and with other Palestinians. We also hope and strive for Russia's role in international politics to be more active. We are confronting the United States and its policy in the region. We are discussing the role of Russia in the international arena, but we also discuss issues related to prisoners of war and their exchange – the ones Hamas hold – prisoners of war who have dual citizenship, for example Israeli and Russian citizenship. We discussed the issue of their release.

How many prisoners of war

are there? Russians with Russian citizenship?

There are six of them. These prisoners were captured during the fighting and taken to military bases. At first, no one said anything about their second citizenship. But they started talking about citizenship, that they were Russians. All the prisoners we have are ones with dual citizenship. That's why we have Americans, Italians, French, Germans, Belgians — almost all of them have dual citizenship. When we captured them, we in fact captured Israeli soldiers. But after they were captured, they began to talk about their second citizenships.

The President of South Africa called me. The head of their intelligence services asked us

about one particular prisoner. When we started looking into the question we found that he was actually a tank crewman. He was captured in his tank. When they started the war he was a citizen of Israel – now they say he's a citizen of South Africa.

We are now in the midst of the Hamas-Israel conflict. What kind of help do you expect from Russia? Is this just negotiations between various Palestinian factions or something else?

Russia, of course, is an influential international player and such a vast country, with such importance, plays a big role in international politics. America's position in general and its position after 7th October has weakened

considerably. The significance of the United States in the region has decreased as well. Therefore, we count on Russia to play a greater role in international politics. Russia can play a big role in international politics, especially in the BRICS bloc, as in addition to Brazil, China, South Africa, Russia, India, the Saudis and the Emirates have joined this organisation. Within the framework of this union they can play a big role in the politics of the Middle East. Therefore, Hamas wants Russia to stand up against the United States on this issue regarding Palestine and the Middle East. We trust Russia just as Israel trusts the United States. Yes, maybe the balance of forces here is not equal. But we are still interested and we trust Russia, we want Russia to play a role at this point.

The 7th October attack itself, which Hamas carried out on Israel, was obviously well prepared. Did you expect such consequences? Did you expect such a large-scale extermination afterwards? Or do you find Israel's acts of genocide surprising?

We did not expect aggression of this scale, because it was an unprecedented crime in the history of mankind. In 100 days, more than 23,000 civilians were killed, 70% of whom were women and children. And the peculiarity of this is that all this happens on cameras and television screens. And the whole world is watching. This is not the way it was before, but today everyone can see everything. But here I want to clarify two points. This is not the first massacre that Israel has committed against Palestinians. Since 1948, Israel has carried out dozens of massacres against Palestinians. They believe that the only good Palestinian is a dead Palestinian, or a Palestinian who lives outside of Palestine.

And the second point is the

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direct US support for Israel in crimes against civilians in order to gain political pressure over Hamas to force them to retreat. Therefore, US policy is to pressure and punish civilians in order to obtain a political result or political success afterwards, just as happened in Vietnam, Japan, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

How do you plan to win this war?

In two ways. The first is the resilience of the Palestinian people, their love for their land and their willingness to defend it. You have probably already seen how the Palestinians refuse to be expelled from their homeland, despite the fact that everyone has lost a large number of their relatives, loved ones, and even some of them are still under the rubble, but the Palestinian people insist that they defend his land — they do not accept another land as their homeland. The second way is military resistance against the Israeli army. And we have succeeded a lot in this regard. Therefore, over the past 100 days, the enemy has lost thousands of its tanks, and hundreds of soldiers, thousands were injured. Israeli society has been suffering damage because of this war as well. Israel is waging war and the Israeli do not know its purpose. In the beginning they already declared their goals, which they could not achieve. At first they thought that they could just fight like this for one week and achieve all their goals, but today they have been into this war for 106 days, and they have not achieved any goals in Gaza.

Do you have many political and military



• DFLP women's unit training in Gaza.

allies in this war that you are now waging with Israel?

We, of course, have relationships with different states in the region. Naturally, the United States has a great opportunity to put pressure on their decisions in the region, but for now we still keep in touch with them. Our real allies are the people: the Islamic, Arab people. Today we can notice how in Europe, especially in the USA, thousands of people go to rallies in support of Palestine. The crisis in Palestine has become the most important one all over the world for so many people.

The most pressing news right now is that Israel is already planning not just to occupy the territory of Gaza, but to build settlements there. What kind of future does Gaza have in general?

Everything you said about the Gaza Strip and Israel has not happened yet, because the Israeli army is retreating, they are leaving these areas, the people are returning there, and Hamas will re-establish its control of the region. And even in the north now, Israel admitted that Hamas has managed to restore its military strength and has resumed its military

activities in northern Gaza. For example, Beit Hanoun is the first place that the Israeli army entered at the beginning of the war, and they still cannot control this area, and there is fierce resistance on the battlefield.

Who do you think is winning in this war?

We will definitely win.

In a military sense, are you sure of that? The war between Israel and Hamas caused a chain reaction in the world. We now see the entire Middle East has become uneasy. We see the situation in Iran and Pakistan, we see what

is happening in Syria and Iraq. The feeling is that the conflict in Gaza has triggered a general crisis in the region. Are we heading towards World War III?

Of course, we don't expect war, we don't think that World War Three is going to break out. But the war in the region takes place between two unequal parties, so victory in this type of war is to prevent the enemy from achieving his goals. If we intervene and do not allow the result to be achieved, then this will be a victory for us. Beirut and Yemen have already entered this war. Iraq has also got involved.

And we think that there will be reactions and consequences in all Arab countries. After this war, there will be changes. And the main reason is that America helps and supports Israel in the international arena, at the UN Security Council. The US helps with weapons, Washington provides military and financial assistance.

Do you think that the crisis is going to affect all of the Middle East?

No, of course not. I don't think it will be like a major Middle East war, but it remains within the framework of the Israeli-Palestinian war. The crisis may either escalate or subside, based on the time frame that Israel can withstand and continue its aggression. When the aggression ends, I think everything will end in the region. And the longer the Israeli aggression continues, the wider the escalation will expand in the region. South Africa filed an application to the International Court accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza, and Indonesia filed an application to the international court accusing Israel of genocide too.

You are one of the main leaders of Hamas, for Israel you are one of its main enemies. Were there any attempts to assassinate you? You are in a very dangerous situation.

I don't think Israel will do it all at once, because they know very well that every action leads to counter-action, so I think they calculate their steps before committing a crime.

What relationship does Hamas have with Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation?

The Palestine Liberation Organisation



is an organisation that represents all Palestinians. We at Hamas strive and demand that we become part of this organisation. We also strive for a truce with Fatah, so that we can have one programme, one unity of people and power.

Last personal question. You are actually a refugee, you were born in Rafah, if I'm not

mistaken, in Gaza. You are a person who has actually been stateless all your life, a person without a passport, like most Palestinians. What is it like to live your whole life without citizenship, without a passport and without any rights at all?

I am proud, of course, that I am a Palestinian, a citizen of Palestine, even if the international society does not want

to admit that. And yes, Palestinians have the right to be recognised as Palestinians. But the international society knows that the Palestinians among all Arabs are the most educated, literate, civilised people. And I have a document for travelling, like a passport, it's Egyptian, but I never felt the freedom of movement as I experienced it

when I entered Gaza. Therefore, Palestinians are found in virtually all states and countries in the region. And this is the motive that pushes them to be part of liberation organisations or movements in the region. I was born in 1951 in Rafah, and in 1967 I visited my home village and I saw my home there. And there was a Jewish family from Yemen – Jews

living in this house. My father was standing nearby. I saw tears rolling down his cheeks when he looked at his house, which he had built with his own hands, he saw the trees that he had planted in the ground, and a Jewish family who came from Yemen and occupied our house was collecting the fruits from those trees. Therefore, my motive has always been to return

to that particular house, my home, and my people also want to return to their homes from which they were expelled. And we will resist until we achieve this goal.

Thank you very much for the interview and for the honour you did to me.

Thank you very much.

Pravda.ru

From Opium War to Electric Cars

by Ding Gang

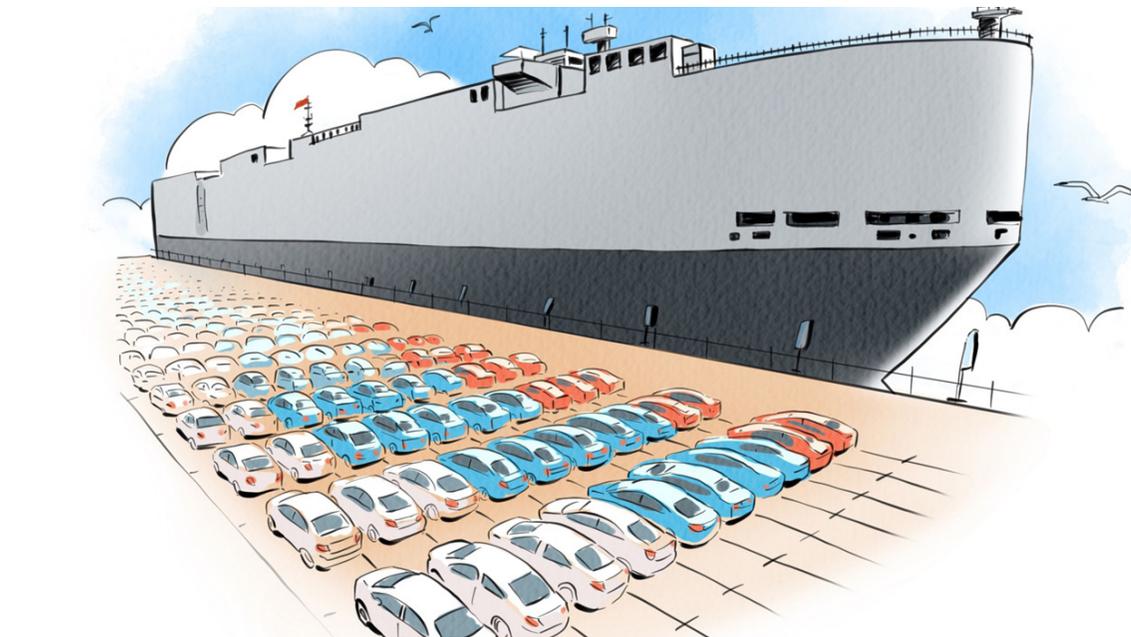
Last month a large ro-ro ship loaded with more than 5,000 electric vehicles (EVs) from a port in southern China arrived in ports in the Netherlands and Germany.

The 200-metre *BYD Explorer No 1* crossed the Strait of Malacca, sailed across the Indian Ocean, rounded the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa, and finally entered European waters.

Its trajectory was exactly opposite to the 40-odd warships that set sail from Britain to China 184 years ago, sparking the infamous Opium War in 1840.

China's Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) was defeated, the door to the market was blown open by the British Empire's gunboat policy, opium-laden cargo ships travelled unhindered from then on and the whole country was shattered.

How times have changed. China's global ascent and the developmental trajectory of the UK have diverged significantly. China's BYD, the world's biggest electric car maker, has made significant



progress – not through military prowess but by aligning with global trade regulations, penetrating the European market with a range of EVs that meet European environmental sustainability and affordability standards while maintaining high quality.

Some European parliamentarians and media are calling for a boycott of Chinese-made EVs. However, what Europeans should be focusing on is the positive impact that merchant ships sailing from China to Europe more than 180 years later are having on the world.

Even today, Europeans' understanding

of the Opium War of 1840 is still stuck on the perception that the trigger of that war was the opium trade, and the core was the trade imbalance between China and Britain. To put it bluntly, the British believed that they were making a small profit while the Chinese were making a large profit, and that was why the war with China took place.

This is a fundamental misinterpretation of the nature of the expansion of the Western powers that began 500 years ago, and this misinterpretation has persisted to this day.

The nature of capitalism is to expand, and the

rise of the British Empire was supported by this expansion, which in turn was fuelled by forceful plunder, colonisation and war. This expansion was inherently linked to war, as the two were essentially synonymous with each other.

The British Empire expanded globally through ships. Western nations made ships for transporting opium and goods to China, as well as warships, which were built concurrently and sailed in the same direction.

Based on such historical experience, many scholars in the West have always believed that the rise of China will

surely follow the same path and will inevitably lead to conflict and war. They have never had the historical experience of a peaceful rise in practice, much less in theory. This historical view of the country's rise still determines their attitude and stance toward Chinese manufacturing.

China's car exports leaped to the world's top spot for the first time in 2023, marking a landmark change in global manufacturing.

BYD's big ship has sailed to Europe, and it is also going to open a production plant in Europe.

BYD has planned to secure eight of its dedicated ro-ro ships, ca-

pable of carrying 7,000 EVs without the need for cranes, within two years. All of this development is a result of globalisation and China's commitment to peaceful development.

The era of war-driven imperial expansion is over, and as China and Chinese manufacturing expand globally, the likelihood of war is decreasing rather than increasing.

While conflicts arising from trade may still occur, there is a growing potential for disputes to be resolved through peaceful and cooperative means. The key is if the West can move beyond a world-view centred on power struggles for dominance, in order to understand and engage with China's rise and collaborate with China to establish a new order of relations that can provide development opportunities for more developing countries.

The author is a senior editor with People's Daily, and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at the Renmin University of China in Beijing.

Global Times

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

On 20th October 2023 at 6am, the Secretary General of the Northern Department of the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) of France was, with the assistance of a large police force dispatched for the occasion, arrested at his home and placed in custody. seen and taken to Lille police station where he was informed of his indictment for supporting "terrorism" and "incitement to racial hatred". Now charged he has been summoned to appear before the Lille criminal court on 28th March 2024.

The prosecution seized on an expression taken from a press release from the Northern Department of the CGT dated 10th October 2023, failing to take note of the entire text, in particular the denunciation of crimes against all civilian victims without distinction and refusing any contextualisation of the attack of 7th October 2023 in an ongoing conflict since 1948.

The CGT has always condemned the massacre committed on 7th October. Explaining that violence that generates violence cannot constitute a justification of violence. To explain is not to justify.

This, in a repressive context rarely equalled in France since the 1940s, is an extremely serious and dangerous attack against democratic rights and freedom of

expression.

We denounce this subpoena for what it is: unfair and unacceptable. We would like to remind you that the CGT fights daily against racism, anti-Semitism and all forms of discrimination as demonstrated by its press releases, leaflets, analyses and actions.

Attached to respect for international law, calling for peace between peoples, aware that this accusation is an attempt to intimidate all voices calling for a just peace in the Middle East, we demand respect for democratic rights, freedom of association and freedom of expression.

This is why we support to the Northern Department of the CGT and demand the abandonment of legal proceedings against its Secretary General and all trade union militants.

**Samuel Meegens
CGT North
France**

Dear Comrades

Britain, along with a number of other Western countries, is in rapid social and economic decline. It's so serious that we could become a failed state in the not-too-distant future. Bourgeois pundits in the establishment media fail to understand or accept what is in fact the classic terminal crisis of capitalism. A situation made worse by the apparent incompetence of government. Instead, they embark upon a barrage of hostile and insulting propaganda against all the socialist countries. Notably People's China, which they wishfully claim to be on the verge of economic collapse. They resent its spectacular economic growth, detest its growing political influence and fear

the nation's military prowess, which is now able to challenge their ambitions for Imperialist world hegemony.

Of course the socialist countries face enormous challenges. Building a new more democratic form of society is no easy task. It requires hard work, study and a commitment to replacing competitive values with cooperation and mutual respect. They may take different roads and encounter different risks and obstacles. Tactics may need to change as different stages of development are reached. So by adopting Marxism, a dynamic philosophy that accepts change and its effects, they will surely succeed.

China's rapid progress has been assisted by 'opening up'. A process initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 which has helped to transform China into a global powerhouse. It has achieved the world's second largest economy and become the largest trading nation. China claims to have a socialist market economy which incorporates a degree of central planning that oversees the development blueprint. A market economy is competitive with the price of goods and services priced according to demand. Such a system does however have its risks and disadvantages.

As supply and demand vary so can the job market with associated unemployment risks and wage pressures. Effective regulation remains essential for stability, sustainable development and supporting the national interest. Strong government intervention may become necessary to avoid profiteering, short-termism, corrup-

tion and stock market speculation. Bold fiscal measures may also be necessary to maintain an acceptable level of equality. Land should always be owned by the people. And those people must have an accessible first class health service with full social care throughout their lives. The Communist Party of China (CPC) has unleashed great entrepreneurial skills which have made a major contribution to wealth creation. It has maintained a strategic balance between private and public ownership.

As the Chinese economy continues to develop new challenges will arise and new policies may become necessary. The Soviet Union, under Lenin, went through a period of private enterprise referred to as the New Economic Policy. Millionaires now exist in China while others are just emerging from poverty. This uncomfortable situation is temporary and will be overcome as general prosperity continues to rise rapidly. Everyone will have all they need and no one will be excluded or denied the opportunity to reach their full potential. When we achieve full communism money in all its forms will no longer exist at a domestic level.

**John Maryon
Suffolk**

Dear Comrades

Who bombed the Belgrade kindergartens, caused a humanitarian disaster in Libya, killed half a million Iraqi civilians, and started a war in Syria? The USA. But for some reason, Russia is the main aggressor.

Who is threatening

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

UNTIL FRI 22 MARCH

ScreenCuba: Festival of Cuban cinema. Garden Cinema, 39-41 Parker Street, London WC2B 5PQ. Details at screencuba.uk

UNTIL 31 MARCH

Martin Parr Foundation: *Photographs from the Miners' Strike 1984-5*. Paintworks, 316, Arno's Vale, Bristol BS4 3AR.

SAT 16 & SUN 17 MARCH

Stand Up to Racism Stop: National demonstrations for UN anti-racism day: 6, 11:00: BBC Scotland, Pacific Way, Glasgow G51; 12:00, Home Office, Marsham Street, London SW1. Sun 17th: 11:00, Welsh parliament, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff CF99.

SUN 17 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: Annual oration at Karl Marx's grave at Highgate Cemetery by John Hendy KC. 13:30, Highgate Cemetery, London, N6 6PJ

TUE 19 MAR

Abingdon Peace Group: 'Revealed: Military Influences on UK Nuclear Power Decisions'. 20:00-21:00. Zoom: ID: 913 1513 4101 Passcode: 015836

TUES 19 MARCH to 24 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: British Labour History 1780-1990 Labour Race and Empire. Online weekly course. Book in MML website

THUR 21 MAR

London Renters Union: Building the movement for rent controls. 18:45 Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

THUR 21 MARCH

Marx Memorial Library: Marx Ravi Raham on *Global Labour and Peripheral Capital*.

19:00. Hybrid book launch. Register on MML website.

FRI 22 MARCH

Medical Aid for Palestine: Irish Musical Night for Palestine, 19:00. Cock Tavern, 23 Phoenix Road, London NW1 1HB Tickets, £10 from www.ticketalior.com

SUN 25 MARCH

Scottish *Morning Star* Supporters: Conference on military and social spending. 12:00-16:00 STUC 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP.

WED 10 APRIL

Marx Memorial library: Albano Nunes on the Portuguese Revolution 50 Years on. 19:00 Online lecture. Register on MML website.

SAT 13 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: Booksale. 11:00 at Library.

WED 24 APRIL

Cuba Solidarity Campaign Merseyside: Cuba Vive - medical aid fundraiser. 19:30, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool L1 9BP.

SUN 28 APRIL

Workers Memorial Day. See TUC and STUC websites for local events.

WED 1 MAY

International Workers Day. See TUC and STUC websites for local events.

SAT 11 MAY

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Join the Day of Action against US nuclear weapons coming to Britain. See CND website for local events.

SAT 18 MAY

Burford Levellers Day. 10:30-15:00, Burford, Oxfordshire OX18, starting at the Green by Warwick Hall.

The editor welcomes letters from our readers. If you have a contribution to make please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday. You can send your letters to: PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, or email party@NCP.clara.net

Gaza: Stop the Genocide!

by New Worker correspondent

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators marched on the American embassy in London last weekend to demand justice for the Palestinian Arabs and an immediate end to Israeli aggression in Gaza.

Jeremy Corbyn and the singer Charlotte Church joined over 400,000 protesters in London to demand an end to the fighting in the Strip days after an official said the capital's streets have become a "no-go

zone for Jews". But 13 different Jewish organisations took part in the National March for Palestine on Saturday giving the lie to the Government's commissioner for countering extremism who says the protests had turned London into a "no-go zone for Jews every weekend". Jeremy Corbyn said: "We're here because we're appalled at the bombing that's still going on in Gaza.

"We're also demonstrating our right to demonstrate, there's so much talk about people shouldn't be on



demonstrations, well today there's a lot of us here, all faiths, all ethnic groups, men and women, led by women. No problem, no trouble, it's a march of love."

The former Labour leader said: "There will be as many of them as it takes. It's all very well for Joe Biden to say they're going to build a port to deliver aid.

"(It would) be far better if they stopped delivering arms to Israel and made sure there was a ceasefire."

This was echoed by Charlotte Church,

the famed Welsh singer and song-writer, who said: "There's been singing, there's been drumming, yes, there's been emotion but, in the majority, that emotion has been love, has been compassion, because that's why we're all here. We're all here because we cannot bear what we're witnessing. We cannot bear to see civilians, children, women slaughtered... we're also showing that we are absolutely not going to tolerate our government being a part of propping up an apartheid regime."

War of the worlds

by Alex Reeves

It's said that HG Wells's novel of the very same name as this article was a seminal piece of work in the niche area of sci-fi that is 'invasion literature'. Reflective of Victorian era superstitions and prejudices and written as a commentary on the impacts of colonialism and the morality of imperialism in the waning of the 19th Century.

These questions and concepts are far from new in our beloved Vietnam, in fact they have been and still are woven into the historical fabric of the previous and current century. Questions of past, present and future are still pertinent on the impact of foreign influence in Vietnam and the growing

changes prevalent in modern society.

They say that we shouldn't compare cultures, that we should embrace them and triumph the distinctions which provide us a richness of diversity in both practice and perspective. While I warmly agree with this notion, after half a decade in which Hanoi has become 'home', it is somewhat impossible not to notice a few

things.

Far from being a warning letter, academic insight or even a social commentary into UK or Vietnamese culture (I'll leave that to those eminently more qualified to do so), this is but an observation that I know is shared by many fellow 'expatriated' friends, though I personally prefer to consider myself a migrant.

Sat here from my

writing space in northern England towards the end of the short break back home I take every two years, I notice a shift in small social differences that make me pine for Vietnam despite such a short period of time. As the UK begins to embrace the age of technology, a country that prides itself on decorum, seems to be losing its grip on matters of manners.

When I first moved to Vietnam I was warned of the bureaucratic nightmares which awaited me and encountered first-hand a seeming fear in workers of the service industry to do anything out of their specific remit. Using logic to streamline a process or even substituting an ingredient in a meal or drink seemed a step too far, a risk one wasn't willing to take in the name of enhancing customer experience.

That now seems to have come full-circle, while in recent years I have noticed a growth in the bespoke and a desire to tailor service to customers in Vietnam, a slight more human touch is also noticeable in everyday moments such as shopping, making appointments and the myriad of cafe and

cocktail bars spread across the capital.

Whereas back here in good ol' blighty it appears that our commitment to common sense has all but gone out of the window. The computer really does say no and there's no humanity left to resolve such basic dilemmas as getting a new bank card, sim card or an alteration to a reservation. Staff are now standing representatives of what the machine or policy in front of them says, powerless to evoke a sense of discretion, let alone use it.

While I might be a world away from home, wherever that is these days, there's certainly no war when it comes to warmth, in temperature, spirit or mind. Aside from the hearth of the local pub or the embrace of family, there's only one winner here and I can't wait to be back next week.

VNS



• Hanoi the capital of Vietnam.

Ukraine: The blame game begins

by Ilya Tsukanov

Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky has accused his NATO sponsors of playing “internal political games” instead of providing critical arms assistance to Kiev, warning that “the world will remember” such a betrayal. Sputnik reached out to a pair of veteran US military experts for a read on the implications of Zelensky’s comments.

“Ukraine asked for nothing more than necessary to protect lives,” Zelensky complained in a video address last Saturday night, commenting on the deadly results of a purported Russian drone strike in Odessa.

“When lives are lost, and partners are simply playing internal political games or disputes that limit our defence, it’s impossible to understand. It’s unacceptable. And it will be impossible to forget – the world will remember this,” Zelensky said.

Zelensky’s remarks come against the backdrop of the continued deadlock in Washington over a \$61 billion multi-year Ukraine arms aid package, and the commitment of a paltry \$4.5 billion by European NATO powers France and Germany, as the Ukrainian crisis enters its eleventh year. The figures are a far cry from the \$125 billion-plus delivered to Kiev over the past two years for the proxy war against Russia, which haven’t helped Kiev reach its objectives during last summer’s disastrous counteroffensive to try and oust Russian forces from the Donbas, Kherson, Zaporozhye and Crimea.

“Ukraine’s 2023 offensive was a failure for a variety of reasons including a lack of arms and ammunition, but also due to poorly trained forces and a poorly conceived operational plan,” says former US Marine and independent geopolitical analyst Brian Berletic.

“What weapons and ammunition Ukraine did receive were not in quantities necessary for outfighting Russian forces or breaking through Russian defences. Certain types of capabilities like military aviation, longer-range munitions, additional air defence systems, and electronic warfare capabilities were not even provided ahead of the offensive. Each of these are essential for carrying out the type of offensive operation Ukraine sought to carry out. Even if Ukraine was provided with more types of systems or greater quantities of the systems they have already been provided, deficiencies in trained manpower would remain a serious obstacle for any future offensive,” Berletic said.

A retired American colonel and international consultant, Earl Rasmussen, agrees. Zelensky’s apparent shift in rhetoric is an attempt to “divert the blame” for a counter-offensive that “should have never taken place...just like this conflict should never have taken place.”

“The Russians had established a multi-tier, defensive lines, dug in, had superiority as far as artillery, as far as air defence. There was no air support capable to be even provided to Ukraine. Manpower as well as another factor there. It was an impossi-

ble task. It should never have happened,” Rasmussen said, adding that “the number of weapons didn’t really matter” because it was a strategic dead end from the start.

Ironically, Berletic noted, it was the Ukrainian client state installed by the US and its allies during the 2014 coup d’état to fight Russia which ended up decimating Ukraine’s defence industrial base, and status as the second-largest weapons arsenal in the former Soviet space after the USSR’s liquidation in 1991.

“Up until 2014, Ukraine had its own thriving arms industry with much of it done in co-operation with Russia,” Berletic said. “From 2014 onward, co-operation with Russia ended. Between an inability to find partners capable of replacing Russian inputs for various industrial processes and the general economic decline of Ukraine resulting from incompetent and corrupt leadership in Kiev, these military-industrial capabilities atrophied, leaving Ukraine increasingly dependent on the West as a source of arms and ammunition.”

Subsequently, major defence clients realised that the post-2014 government in Kiev had become incapable of fulfilling contracts, with Thailand cancelling an order of tanks, and “many other nations simply remov[ing] Ukraine as a possible partners in terms of arms purchases”.

“This is an example of what awaits nations which subordinate their sovereignty and future to Washington, London, and Brussels,” Berletic said.

Ukraine was sucked

into a proxy war waged by NATO against Russia for the sake of alliance expansion which Rasmussen characterised as essentially a giant money laundering scheme with the country’s defence sector becoming weakened, rather than being strengthened, by defence cooperation with the West.

“We were providing weapons there. We were providing training, incrementally. You had NATO advisors or contractors inside of Ukraine for a long period of time, I would say even before 2014, but definitely from 2014 on. And we already saw the article in the New York Times showing the involvement of the CIA and the multiple CIA sites. We’ve seen also the growth and expansion of the ‘biological research facilities’. And we had weapon systems. I read some article too in the Washington Post, I think it was approximately 50,000, - this is before the conflict...that approximately 50,000 Ukrainian soldiers had already been trained by NATO to NATO standards,” Rasmussen said.

You had “a diversity of types of equipment coming in” and that was part of the problem he said. “Some of the stuff is former Eastern Bloc equipment. Some of it is NATO equipment... all these systems have differences which complicates the logistical support. I also believe that they underestimated Russia’s capability and their industrial capability to rapidly escalate and their military capability to change tactics, and to adjust to different situations. They were thinking in terms of the 1990s and it’s clear it’s

not the case now”.

Ukraine was put “in a very difficult situation to begin with,” the US Army vet said. “They were fighting a civil war” in the Donbas. “So a lot of their industrial base is in the east...and whatever they had afterwards when the special military operation began, lot of the capabilities, I’m assuming, were destroyed relatively quickly...the West was not prepared to have a direct conflict with a peer competitor. Russia has escalatory dominance. It has superior artillery growth. It has the best air defences in the world. It has air superiority. It has battle-trained people as well. And the population in general, the force structure...you have so many people that had military experience that were in reserves, that could be rapidly activated.”

The West cynically “convinced the Ukrain-

ians that ‘we’re behind you. We’re behind you all the way. We’re behind you for as long as it takes’” Rasmussen recalled, noting that NATO manoeuvred Kiev into a conflict with Moscow before shifting to “we’re behind you as long as we can” with Ukraine losing manpower, seeing their industry destroyed, and their economy wrecked by cutting off trade with Russia in favour of a “stupid” and economically “suicidal” attempt to forge a trade relationship with the European Union.

“They’re talking about investments now, but it’ll take years to put factories in place. And to be honest, if the conflict is still going on, the Russians will hit those industries right off the bat,” Rasmussen said, stressing that there is no way for Kiev to win this conflict.

Sputnik

FROM THE NEW COMMUNIST PARTY

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

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

Pentagon's 'Ukrainian Fantasy' Is Falling Apart

by Ian DeMartino

French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné met with his Baltic and Ukrainian counterparts in Lithuania last week. The visit came days after French President Emmanuel Macron raised the possibility of French troops being deployed to Ukraine, angering some of his more powerful allies in Europe. But the Pentagon's fantasy in Ukraine is falling apart, says former UN weapons inspector and commentator Scott Ritter.

Speaking on reports in the American media that say there are growing tensions between Kiev and Washington because Ukraine reportedly did not listen to tactical advice offered by the Pentagon, Ritter said he believes the assertions are not based on reality but instead are designed to shift the blame

away from the United States.

"The Pentagon is definitely trying to create political cover for itself because their huge Ukrainian fantasy is falling apart," Ritter explains saying that Ukraine had little choice but to hold Avdeyevka [liberated by the Russians last month] for as long as possible so that defensive lines could be built behind it, noting however, that Russian air-power pre-

vented even that goal from being achieved.

"It's easy to play arm-chair quarterback and just sit back there and pick apart. But the reality is what other choices [did] the Ukrainians have but to try and hold onto the last defensible position they [had]?"

The Kiev regime is "waking up to the reality that their so-called friends and allies are abandoning them and leaving Ukraine

to its own fate" Ritter said while discussing Macron's comments that French troops may be deployed in Ukraine, a hypothetical that Ritter says is only being discussed because of the position Ukraine is in.

"To understand why Macron would even be talking about this, you have to understand how dire the situation is for Ukraine right now. They are facing military collapse, right now as we speak the last reserves of Ukraine

are being thrown into the battle outside the village of Orlovka," Ritter said. "This is to buy time for a miracle to happen and the Ukrainians are hoping the miracle will be the arrival of a French battle-group."

That possible "miracle" would not change the outlook on the battlefield, Ritter argues, saying that their ability "to deploy a military meaningful force to Ukraine is very slim," with or without the Baltic

State allies Macron is reportedly seeking.

Meanwhile the election season is forcing the United States to step back from the conflict.

"Biden is in a presidential election cycle, we're coming up on the final sprint to November. ... Biden will do whatever is necessary to minimise his political exposure".

"We fired [Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs] Victoria Nuland, the architect of [the Ukraine] policy, and we [took] a step back".

That has left Europe "sitting there, realizing that, frankly speaking, they are nothing without American money. This is a hard pill to swallow and meanwhile, on the battlefield, the Ukrainian army is in absolutely desperate straits".

Sputnik

Protests at Dutch Holocaust museum

by Ed Newman

Israeli President Isaac Herzog attended the opening of the National Holocaust Museum in Amsterdam last weekend. But his presence prompted protests over Israel's war in Gaza.

Thousands of protesters, near a square close to the museum, demonstrated against Israeli aggression

which has, over the past five months killed more than 31,000 Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

The Holocaust museum showcases the stories of the 102,000 Jews who were deported from the Netherlands and murdered in Nazi camps, as well as their persecution during the German occupation in the Second World War. Three-quarters of Dutch Jews were among the six

million Jews systematically murdered by the Nazis.

Dutch Jewish anti-Zionist organisation Erev Rave, which organised the protest with the Dutch Palestinian community and the Socialist International, said that while it is important to honour the memory of Holocaust victims, it cannot stand idly by while the war in Gaza continues.

"For us Jews, these museums are part of our

history, of our past," said Joana Cavaco, an activist with Erev Rav, addressing the crowd before the museum's opening ceremony. "How is it possible that such a sacred space is being used to normalise genocide today?"

A pro-Palestinian Dutch organisation, The Rights Forum, called Herzog's presence "a slap in the face of the Palestinians who can only helplessly watch how

Israel murders their loved ones and destroys their land".

Meanwhile the Jewish Cultural Quarter that runs the museum says it is "profoundly concerned by the war and the consequences this conflict has had, first and foremost for the citizens of Israel, Gaza and the West Bank." It added that it is "all the more troubling that the National Holocaust Mu-

seum is opening while war continues to rage. It makes our mission all the more urgent".

The museum says it invited Herzog before the events of 7th October. It said it recognised that Herzog's attendance was controversial, but that he represents the country where Dutch Holocaust survivors migrated to after the war.

Radio Havana Cuba