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INTERLIB

Journal of the Liberal International British Group



EVENTS

February 21st LIBG Forum on Ukraine – see page 3 follow

11th-13th March - Liberal Democrats Spring Conference – Online

12th-13th March - ALDC Spring Conference – Live and concurrent with Liberal Democrats Online conference

17th-20th September - Liberal Democrats Autumn Conference at the Brighton Centre.

1st-12th November - UNFCCC Climate COP 27 Egypt (Sharm El Sheikh)

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Photographs: Stewart Rayment,

Cover Photograph – Local protests against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, during the Beijing Winter Olympics.



Ukraine, Russia, and a destabilised neighbourhood



A Zoom Event organised by Liberal International (British Group) in association with the Paddy Ashdown Forum and European Liberal Forum

Register Here

<https://forms.office.com/r/ucY5kXVRSj>

21st February 2022 at 18.00 – 19:30 (London Time)

About The Event

The international community is seriously concerned about the situation on Ukraine's borders. Diplomatic talks have failed so far with Russia demanding that it has a right to a sphere of influence. Ukraine and the EU have not always been included at the table and there have been accusations of a 'new Yalta'. In the wider region President Putin is obviously afraid of losing his power over the CSTO, having expressed his fears of 'colour revolutions'. Sanctions against Russia would have adverse effects on European economies too. Is it possible to find solutions via more sophisticated negotiations?

Our expert speakers will give us their insights into the various positions of Ukraine, the European Union and the US/NATO on the situation in February 2022.

Speakers include:

Orysia Lutsevych

Orysia Lutsevych is the head of the Ukraine Forum at Chatham House and a research fellow in the Russia and Eurasia Programme.

Jamie Shea

Dr Jamie Shea is a former senior NATO official and professor of strategy and security at the University of Exeter. He is currently an Associate Fellow on the International Security Programme at Chatham House and President of the Center for War Studies at Southern Denmark University.

TBC: a current MEP

Chair: Irina von Wiese

Putin's motives in Ukraine

Dr Carol Weaver

The way we see the world is often related to time and whether our current mindset is in the present or somewhere in the past. For example, we could say that the mindset of most European countries is in the present and they see Russian incursion into sovereign Ukraine as Russian expansion, whereas the mindset of the Kremlin is in the past and it sees a loss of Russian control over most post-Soviet states as a reduction in Russia's sphere of influence. Some might say the Cold War never ended so both East and West desire to keep or extend their sphere of influence.

The Kremlin has recently seemed to desire a new Yalta agreement with the US, possibly to stem what it sees as Western backed 'colour revolutions' in countries such as Belarus and Kazakhstan which are members of the post-soviet security alliance, the CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization). The Russian president is reported as saying, "We will not allow the realization of so-called colour revolution scenarios" at a January videoconference of the organisation (Moscow Times).

So, it's possible that Russia's current build-up of troops around Ukraine is less connected to Ukraine itself and more about a warning to all CSTO countries, including Russia itself, where populations might protest in support of democracy. The display of Russian strength might also be connected to a test of US strength or the cohesion of NATO members.

On the other hand, it really could just be about escalating the war with Ukraine or, at least, implementing the ambiguous Minsk 2 agreement (2015) in a way that would give Russia influence in Kyiv.

The West is responding to the build-up of troops. The Russian people are watching on in bewilderment. No doubt China is watching closely too. President Vladimir Putin is not currently short of attention.

As a starting point when examining Putin's motives more deeply, we can look at Angela Stent's description of the 'Putin doctrine' (Foreign Affairs). She affirms that "the core element of this doctrine is getting the West to treat Russia as if it were the Soviet Union, a power to be respected and feared, with special rights in its neighbourhood and a voice in every serious international matter." The doctrine does not agree that all states are fully sovereign but that the most powerful ones should have this kind of authority. The doctrine includes Putin's overarching aim: "reversing the consequences of the Soviet collapse, splitting the transatlantic alliance, and renegotiating the geographic settlement that ended the Cold War."

We can deduce from this doctrine that Putin may well try to balance military action versus diplomacy on the best outcome for himself and his vision. So why now? Several reasons can be considered and they are not mutually exclusive.

Firstly, demonstrations and protests threatening Lukashenko in Belarus after the disputed presidential elections have stimulated Putin's fears of losing another country to the West, especially an important member of the CSTO. A January tweet from Russia's MFA has declared that the president intends to "further prioritise strengthening the strategic alliance with all CSTO member states". This could well be a message to CSTO countries especially Belarus and its inhabitants where the tanks are rolling in without there being an invasion. Lukashenko refers to this as preparing for joint military exercises with Russia (RFE/RL).

Secondly, the chaotic withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan demonstrated a weakness which Putin may well have regarded as an opportunity. He evidently thought the time was right for a show of force hopefully leading to a split between the Western powers.

It has certainly caused disagreements about who should be at the negotiating table and forced the US to say there should be no agreements on Ukraine without Ukraine. Otherwise, the West has probably been showing more unity than expected.

The Russian show of force could also have tested US resolve in the wider Black Sea Region in general and determined whether balanced multipolarity still existed. Perhaps Putin hopes for his country to regain its 'rightful' place as hegemon of the sea (Weaver 2013, 2016).

On the other hand, if Putin's motives are primarily about Ukraine, he could intend to call on the support of the CSTO members to assist in any Ukraine operation after his support to members such as Belarus, Kazakhstan and Armenia in recent years, especially if a military action turned out to be a quagmire.

Whether any operation would be to consolidate the position of the 'Russian backed separatists' in Donbas, to gain further ground into Russian-speaking eastern regions such as Kharkiv, or to force a coup in Kyiv remains unclear.

One motive could be to settle the Donbas situation via Minsk 2 in a way that promotes Russia's interests in Ukraine. Putin could well be negotiating for the West to make concessions or put pressure on Ukraine to change the constitution and allow the occupied areas a special status with influence in Kyiv. Discussions with French President Macron (a 'Normandy format' member) in February could be pointing this way. A huge bonus for Putin would be for the West to take steps towards acknowledging Crimea as Russian. (In both cases the human rights of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians must be protected.)

Despite current diplomacy, a full-scale invasion to install a 'puppet regime' cannot be dismissed and Ukrainians and the West are preparing for this. Ukrainians often say that the best way to obtain peace is to prepare for war.

President Putin will always consider his own position and the next presidential elections will be in two years. Some analysts put forward the view that Russia's foreign policy and Putin's strong man tactics are connected to domestic policy especially given a failing economy. Although he has methods of retaining power, he would prefer to stay as popular as possible, being concerned about his image with the Russian population. Invading Ukraine will not help the rouble which is falling. Russian intellectuals have told the Kremlin to avoid war. Nevertheless, the show of strength towards the world might be a message to the ordinary Russian people that he is keeping them safe.

Three final issues to consider briefly are arms control, energy and China.

The Kremlin is asking the US for an agreement that Ukraine will never join NATO but is being offered talks on arms control instead. For many years there has been a build-up of US arms in eastern Europe and more recently a 'missile defense system' on Black Sea shores (Weaver 2013). Although denying it, Putin may well want these arms talks and be strengthening his position in advance.

Putin could try to weaponise natural gas supplies to European countries in the event of the escalation of war with Ukraine. In particular gas passing through Ukraine could be cut off. (Ukraine itself does not buy Russian gas.) However, most gas to northern European countries passes through Belarusian pipes or a direct pipeline under the sea to Germany - Nord Stream. If Putin went ahead with reducing gas supplies, Russia would suffer too as its economy largely depends on natural gas. In addition, Biden has threatened to stop a newly built but very disputed second direct pipeline, Nord Stream 2, as part of the sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine.

If Putin's fears are that NATO is encroaching from the West, they must also be afraid of China encroaching from the East whether this is territorial or otherwise. Nevertheless, there are indications of China and Russia working closely together including the joint statement made at the beginning of the Winter Olympics *inter alia* denouncing NATO expansion. The new AUKUS (Australia, UK, US) Alliance is also a concern to China and the two large powers seem to agree that the US should not interfere in their spheres of influence.

Returning to the concept of time we can only exist in the current moment and Putin is in a position to both invade Ukraine and create havoc in European countries through gas supplies, cyber wars and other means, including full scale war. He has said, according to a February tweet, that “the right of states to freely choose methods to ensure their security” is only part of an “indivisible security formula” because it should not be done “at the expense of others”. If he is referring to Ukraine joining NATO this is not on the current agenda, but its sovereignty was guaranteed by Russia, the US and the UK through the Budapest Memorandum on Security Assurances 1994 when the country gave up its nuclear weapons.

This is the situation in mid-February 2022. Putin would seem to have multiple motives for his actions on Ukraine’s borders but only time will tell if he is intending military action or playing a Cold War game of brinkmanship.

Dr Carol Weaver

Dr Carol Weaver is an independent political researcher specialising in the Black Sea Region, the South Caucasus, Ukraine, the European Union and European Security. She contested Rutland & Melton in the 2019 general election.

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Additional links from Chatham House:

Voices from Ukraine, video from Kharkiv https://youtu.be/3ZrCw_h9S4M

2021 Lutsevych O. *Ukraine stands firm, but its allies must do likewise*

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2021/12/ukraine-stands-firm-its-allies-must-do-likewise>

The Plight of Iran's Kurds

Arif Bawecani

The regime of the Islamic Republic of Iran, from the first days after coming to power until today, has resorted to a lot of oppression, harassment and threats against people and those who work for the truth and freedom, and among these threats figured, execution is always the most dangerous.

The regime continues to practice capital punishment as a tool to repress activists. According to Amnesty International statistics, 2020 witnessed the execution of at least 246 people in Iran, but the number is expected to be much higher, as many executions are not disclosed.

Statistics show that anyone who opposes the Iranian Islamic government is accused of fighting against God (Moharebeh). During their 42 years of rule and power in Iran, thousands of Kurdish socio-political activists and other nations were executed on various charges.

The dogmatic and oligarchic ruling system in Iran sees the only solution to the demands of non-Persian nations in their physical elimination, and therefore, after imprisonment and mortal torture, execution is a preferable solution for them.

The leaders of the ruling regime believe that the continuous and widespread executions can control all the demands and protests of the different sections of society and guarantee the life and permanence of their rule by creating a government of terror. However, even the scale of physical eliminations and global repression has not been able to weaken the will of the Kurdish nation and other non-Persian nations in Iran to exercise their rights, including the right to self-determination.

Available statistics show that more than half of the victims of capital punishment in Iran have been Kurds. Moreover, most of the political prisoners were and are Kurds.

Over the past 42 years, we have witnessed international pressures and stances against the excessive execution of the death penalty in Iran. Over the years, human rights organizations, rapporteurs and the UN Secretary General have regularly reported reports, and the UN General Assembly has condemned human rights violations and the increase in executions in Iran.

Despite international criticism and pressure, the number of executions is increasing every year and the Iranian government does not care about the opinions of the international community.

Executions take place daily, openly or covertly, and the Islamic State's execution machine keeps claiming more and more victims. Two months ago, a Kurdish activist from Eastern Kurdistan, Mr. Haider Qurbani, was secretly executed without warning. His family and lawyer were unaware of the details of his case and the execution of the sentence. The Iranian authorities accused Haider Qurbani of his membership in the centre-left Kurdistan Democratic Party - Iran, and his opposition to the Iranian state.

The death sentence was carried out at a time when a number of UN rapporteurs and experts, including: Mr. Javaid Rehman¹, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Mr. Morris Tidball Binz, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. and human rights organizations had called on the Iranian government to suspend his execution and allow a fair trial.

Arif Bawecani

Arif Bawecani, is Leader of the Party Serbesti Kurdistan (PSK) the Kurdish Liberal Democrat party, and is active in the struggle for Kurdish rights and Kurdish Diplomacy in diaspora.

¹ Statement by Javaid Rehman, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the forty-sixth session of the Human Rights Council - Item 4, Geneva 9th March 2021
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26869&LangID=E>

Tigray and the Ethiopian Civil War

We frequently chide the internationalist Liberal Democrats for the lack of international content in their conference agendas, but from time to time they come up trumps. Whilst the world forgets the conflict in Ethiopia, over-shadowed as it is by the threats to Ukraine, it has made it to the Spring Conference agenda. To prepare yourselves for the debate – should Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed be stripped of his Nobel Peace Prize? The Norwegian Nobel committee has said won't strip him of his Nobel Peace Prize, but that he bears a "special responsibility" to end the war and humanitarian crisis in his country's Tigray region.

F17 Tigray and the Ethiopian Civil War

11 members

Mover: Layla Moran MP (Spokesperson for Foreign Affairs and International Development).

Summation: To be announced.

Conference notes with concern:

- A. The ongoing civil war in Ethiopia, primarily between Ethiopian government forces and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has resulted in:
- i) The deaths of tens of thousands of civilians by airstrikes, massacres and starvation.
 - ii) The internal displacement of 4 million.
 - iii) At least 9 million in need of desperate help.
- B. The publication of the Joint Investigation by the UN Human Rights Office and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, which found that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that all parties to the conflict in Tigray have, to varying degrees, committed violations of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, some of which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity".
- C. The humanitarian crisis and in particular the threat of mass starvation in:
- i) Tigray, which has been particularly exacerbated by the de facto blockade of aid into the region by the Ethiopian government.
 - ii) Other parts of Northern Ethiopia, where the UN World Food Programme (WFP) was forced to halt aid distribution following the looting of warehouses by Tigrayan rebels.
- D. The horrific reports of the use of rape and sexual violence as a tool of conflict, by troops allied with the Ethiopian government in Tigray, as well as by TPLF fighters.
- E. The alleged atrocities committed by Tigrayan forces in Amhara and Afar including reports of summary executions.
- F. The highly concerning reports of mass detention of Tigrayans, by the Ethiopian government, on the basis of their ethnicity.
- G. The refusal of all parties to the conflict to seriously engage with attempts, including those of the African Union and former Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo to negotiate a ceasefire.

H. The serious danger of the potential spread of ethnic violence spreading to and including areas of Sudan and Eritrea.

I. That the UK's influence in the Horn of Africa, and therefore our ability as an actor making the case for a diplomatic solution, has been hampered by our exit from the European Union and the Government's decision to abandon the international development target of 0.7% of GNI.

J. The planned Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) cut to Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Ethiopia, from £241m in 2020-21 to £108m in 2021-22.

Conference reaffirms the fundamental liberal principles of equality, human rights, peace, democracy and the rule of international law.

Conference therefore calls upon the UK Government to:

1. Redouble efforts to pursue a ceasefire in Ethiopia.
2. Work with permanent members of the UN Security Council, and other international partners such as the African Union to:
 - a) Push for negotiations to reach a sustainable peace.
 - b) Secure humanitarian access.
 - c) Investigate human rights abuses and war crimes.
3. Use Magnitsky sanctions against those who are perpetrating violence or preventing humanitarian aid from getting to those who need it.
4. Work closely with neighbouring countries in an effort to prevent spill over of ethnic violence to the wider region.
5. Urge all parties to provide safe passage to those fleeing the conflict and to create humanitarian corridors.
6. Restore the 0.7% of GNI target for international development spending including:
 - a) Urgently increasing funding for humanitarian relief, via independent agencies, in Ethiopia in 2022/23.
 - b) Providing Official Development Assistance (ODA) support for Ethiopian and Tigrayan refugees.
7. Prioritise the eradication of sexual violence in conflict, including by increasing ODA funding for such initiatives.

The deadline for amendments to this motion is 13.00, Monday 28 February; see page 10 of the conference agenda. Amendments selected for debate will be published in the Conference Extra and Saturday Conference Daily updates to the Conference Agenda.

Previous coverage in interLib can be found at:

Conflict in Ethiopia: LIBG Briefing, Rebecca Tinsley. interLib 2020-11 pages 13-14

The Tigray Conflict in Ethiopia: Post-War Ramifications and International Response, by Jon Abbink, interLib 2021-01 pages 9-11

These can be found at the LIBG website www.libg.co.uk

Migrating from Climate Disasters

Imad Ahmad

Liberal International has set out ways to respond to a wave of migration that can be expected from countries affected by climate-related disasters.

Millions of people face great difficulties in handling climate-driven events. These problems are evident and the aim here is to address them with policy recommendations.

We suggest a climate justice pathway that links human rights to human and economic development, as well as safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people.

We acknowledge that the burden of responsibility for reintegrating climate displaced people into the economy rests with High Income Countries which have contributed to the majority stock of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Even more relevant as we are approaching the COP26, parties now need to agree on actions on a variety of issues connected to climate change. More than anything we call for the creation of an effective international framework to deal with climate displacement.

Research published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that we have a carbon budget of approximately 10 years before a point of no-return in triggering Earth system feedback effects which will exacerbate the adverse effects of climate change.

IRREVERSIBLE FEEDBACK

These irreversible system feedback effects include the thawing of permafrost in the Arctic releasing methane; weakening of the land and sea to act as carbon sinks and instead acting in the opposite way with increased forest fires and increasing bacteria in the ocean producing more CO².

The adverse effects include an increased frequency of droughts, floods, disappearance of small island developing states, increased food insecurity, adverse effects to human health, increased threats to livelihoods and an increase in poverty, changing structure of communities, and interacting and cascading risks.

Adverse effects to human health will be seen in both the Global North and Global South through increased diseases and bacteria (such as an increased incidence in Lyme disease and other vector-borne diseases and *Virbio* bacteria in Canada and Northern Europe), malnutrition, greater vulnerability to diseases through malnutrition, greater risk of injuries and deaths owing to more intense heatwaves and fires.

Climate change will fundamentally affect the lives of millions who may be forced to seek refuge in other areas. Between 2008-14, more than 25m people per year were uprooted because of rapid-onset disasters such as floods and storms. In practical terms, climate-induced displaced people, whether displaced internally or across borders, in developing countries will be an issue of international concern, cooperation and assistance.

It is these people who are most likely to be compelled to leave their homes for other locations both within their countries and across national borders owing to low adaptive capacities, their often-vulnerable location vis-a-vis climate change events, often high population densities, existing hunger and health problems, low incomes, often weak governance structures and political instability exacerbated by the effects of climate change.

By increasing food and water shortages, increasing the population of disease vectors, and increasing temperatures, climate change will also harm labour productivity and economic growth in already highly constrained countries in the Global South.

Furthermore, in general, people who are marginalised – in terms of economy, culture, politics, and economics – are more vulnerable to climate change and adaptation to mitigation responses that fail to defend their rights.

According to the IPCC, the impacts of climate change deepen gender inequalities. For instance, according to sociocultural norms, women have less opportunity to influence decisions to mitigate and cope with the impacts of climate change.

To address these issues, the 200th Executive Committee meeting of the Liberal International declared in 2018 in Berlin several principles for approaching the problems.

Among the conclusions in the declaration reached were that all countries will need to act and that this will require action by many stakeholders. Perhaps most importantly, that climate justice is precisely the task of linking human rights to these issues, using a humanitarian approach and “safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people and sharing the burdens and benefits of climate change and its impacts equitably and fairly”.

LEGAL GAP

There is still no clear and internationally accepted institution or framework to assist people who are displaced by causes attributable to climate change. In terms of “the legal gap” these groups are still not covered by international agreements, although there have been promising initiatives during the last 15 years, such as the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration from 2018.

The current system of international law (including refugee, human rights and migration law) is not M 15 equipped to deal with climate induced migration. The intersection of climate change and migration requires comprehensive solutions to the multidimensional challenges it creates.

There is also a lack of agreement among scholars and institutions on the appropriate definition to use for people who have been displaced by causes attributable to climate change. It is worth noticing that while the majority of climate-induced displacement occurs within the borders of countries, some people are forced to move abroad. Bangladesh, China, India and the Philippines each recorded more than four million disaster displacements in 2019.

To conclude, millions of people in different parts of the world face great difficulties in handling these climate-driven events. Historically, the factual and moral burden of causing this situation is shared between many economically successful nations, not least the Global North.

These problems are evident, and the aim of this paper is to address them with the following policy recommendations. We aim, therefore, to prevent and mitigate the forecast problems by outlining a climate justice pathway that links human rights to human and economic development, as well as safeguarding the rights of the most vulnerable people. In the following, we seek to approach a humanitarian approach based on sharing the burdens and benefits of climate changes and impacts equitably and fairly.

To get the terminology right, we believe that ‘climate displacement’ is the most useful term. The alternative term, climate-driven migration, has other connotations that we wish to avoid. Migration is, indeed, one adverse effect following from climate change, but all stakeholders must at the same time recognise that re-allocation of persons due to climate effects will exist – and evidently already exists – in practically every nation and every region in the world. To us, the term migration will most probably continue to mislead the discussion as if this matter would be a challenge only for some nations.

The rising use of the term ‘environmental displacement’ - refers to other sorts of adverse effects than those from greenhouse gases. We hold the view that other environmental consequences could be included in the term climate displacement.

We suggest creating an effective international framework. With their legacy of contribution of greenhouse gases, the Global North has a responsibility in creating this. We call on the EU to contribute to the commitment of the Global North in developing such a framework and take the lead in the Global North to reduce damage caused by climate change. There are several areas that we would like to suggest as important aims of such a framework

This should include:

- 1) Developing and support climate adaption programmes in areas vulnerable to possible climate displacement. Examples of priorities are risk assessment, facilitating living standards, financial instruments for managing natural disaster risks and needed infrastructural projects and sustainable finance.
- 2) Supporting the development and the diffusion of new technological innovations that, in a sustainable way, prevent the adverse effects of climate displacement. More specifically, there is a need for early warning systems and other applications to be made accessible in the Global South.
- 3) Recognising the promising work already accomplished, as for example manifested in the Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and the Nansen Protection Agenda. There is a need for further research efforts on coordinated migration and strengthening of multilateralism.
- 4) Supporting governments and local communities to create protection in most efficient and decentralised ways and promote regional solutions such as for example insurance schemes to raise resources for prevention of climate displacement. This includes sheltering support and all levels of government and in coordination and collaboration with relevant stakeholders.
- 5) Strengthening the legal protection for climate displacement migrants who are not already covered by other regulations.
- 6) An international alliance of the willing to create further support for those people not recognised within the legal framework. Once again, the nations of the Global North have the responsibility of taking lead in this, and such an alliance could find new methods of handling these issues.

Imad Ahmad

This article is based on a paper on climate displacement issued by a Liberal International working group, on which Imad Ahmad was the Liberal Democrat representative. The paper can read here: https://liberal-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Climate-Induced_Final.pdf

reviews

From Pit Banks to Red Benches, by Jenny Tonge
Louisa Publications 2021 £12.99
isbn 9781919630809

Aged 14 a girl, born to two Black Country teachers read about Albert Schweitzer. Inspired to help people like he did, but without the religion, she decided to become a doctor and in 1959 Jenny Smith became one of 10 women in a class of 120 medical students at University College London.

Jenny spent 30 years in the NHS as a junior doctor and a GP, then a senior medical officer and manager of community health services. Then in 1981 Jenny was one of the Lib Dem group which took control of Richmond-Upon-Thames council and started to put into practice the community politics which the Liberal Party had espoused for a decade. After coming within 4,000 votes of taking the Richmond Park constituency in 1992, she won the seat in 1997 and set to work on local issues like limiting the noise from Heathrow, opposing airport expansion and traffic in and around the Royal park.

She refused to become health spokesperson because she wanted to talk about other things. She became an active member of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Population Development and Reproductive Health because of her unshakeable belief that enabling women to control their fertility and access safe maternal health is essential to the well-being of individuals and the planet.

Jenny's dream job was international development spokesperson, shadowing another Midlander Clare Short. In the aftermath of 11 September 2001, each of them was at odds with their party leader's support for the bombing of Afghanistan.

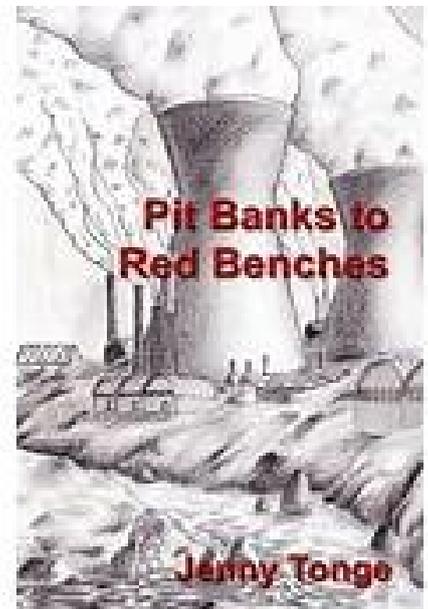
In 2003 after witnessing a rocket attack near the hospital in Gaza, then Labour MP Oona King, who is Jewish, called for a boycott of Israeli products, and Jenny made the statement which will stick with her forever: "If I was a mother and grandmother trying to bring up her family in those conditions (in the Occupied West Bank and Gaza) I might have considered becoming a suicide bomber myself."

She states that she never intended to indicate approval, just that she has always empathised with women and she felt for Palestinian women coping with poor conditions harassment, imprisonment and deaths of their husbands and family. She was instantly sacked from the front bench.

From 2005 to 2021, sitting mostly as an independent in the Lords, she campaigned on the issue of Israel-Palestine and was attacked, sometimes with justification, sometimes without. She never stopped talking about reproductive health and issue such access to contraception and safe abortion, FGM and ending child marriage. In 2015 Jenny was made an Honorary Fellow of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in recognition of her services to women's health.

Those who only know Jenny from media reports should read about the death in 2004 of Jenny's daughter Mary died in a horrific accident. The pain of bereavement and the challenge of helping to bring up two small children are told with characteristic candour. A little of the mischievously funny Jenny occasionally shines through this illuminating read.

Liz Barker



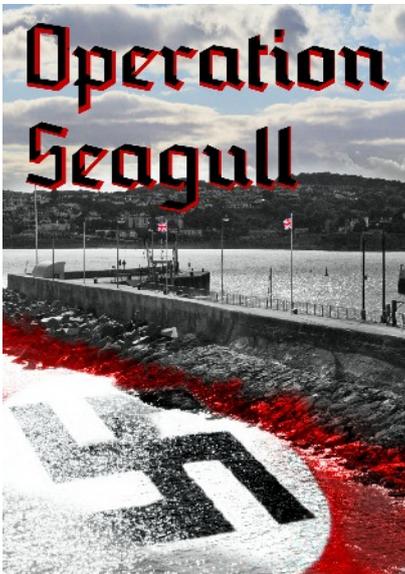
Operation Seagull, by David Scott
David Scott 2022 £10.00+£2.00 p&p.

David Scott is perhaps best-known to Liberals as the man who turned the new constituency of Braintree into a three-way marginal in February 1984. Now Torquay-based he is author of both factual historical studies and well-written novels.

His latest book is a fictional work set in the days leading up to World War Two. This is 'Operation Seagull', a story located in Torquay and which cleverly weaves real events together with a range of fictional characters.

David tells us that he came across this local angle on pre-war Nazi machinations while he was writing his factual and essential history of war-time Torquay, 'The Funk Hole Myth'. Utilising his own research on Torquay's real-life visitors and residents, including local far-right sympathisers, 'Operation Seagull' reproduces a pre-War town and develops the idea of underground Nazi infiltration preparing for a full-scale invasion.

The book comes from that genre of speculative fiction in which real characters feature and where historical events may be finally resolved differently than in real life. Here is a 'What if?' scenario about a crucial time in our history where present outcomes may vary from the historical record.



David's book is a fine addition to that tradition of what could have been. The narrative begins with the German Ambassador Joachim von Ribbentrop's visit the town in 1937 as part of Hitler's charm offensive. It then explores a conspiracy aiming for the ultimate goal of a Nazi-controlled Europe.

This story of Axis conspiracy in an unprepared part of the British coast all takes place against the backdrop of well-known international and national events, and alongside local incidents such as the flooding of the town centre in 1938 and the fire that destroyed Williams and Cox on the Strand in 1937.

So, are the Nazi plots in 'Operation Seagull' successful leading to the German occupation of Britain; or do we realise the danger we are in and repel the planned invasion?

You will have to read the book to find out.

The book can be obtained through David at DScottTorq@aol.com (David doesn't use Amazon on ethical grounds).

Dr Kevin Dixon

The Specials - Protest Songs 1924-2012
island 2021

Legendary Ska band, The Specials step outside of their own modus operandi with this eclectic range of covers that spans from folk and blues through to post-punk and classic rock, and they nail it every time.

The album features twelve singular takes on specially chosen protest songs across an almost 100-year span and shows The Specials still care, are still protesting and are still pissed off. The Specials emerged in the late 1970s as the multiracial flagship of the 2 Tone movement, and sang of racism, unemployment and injustice making a very clear political statement every time they stepped on stage. It's fitting, then, that in 2021, at a time when the world is riven with social, racial and political unrest, that The Specials have made this album



THE SPECIALS

PROTEST SONGS 1924 - 2012

of protest songs and are once again reflecting the society we live in and taking a stand against all forms of injustice. A typically unpredictable collection of unique takes from folk to post-punk, righteous uplift to biting satire, and from Kingston to Alabama, the album is a powerful reminder that there are no fixed rules to what makes a protest song. All that's required is the combination of something that needs to be said with music that needs to be heard. "People have been using music as a vehicle for protest since time immemorial," says bass-player Horace Panter. "Injustice is timeless."

In February 2020, Horace, Terry, Lynval and co-producer Nikolaj Torp Larsen gathered to begin work on a reggae record, the follow up to *Encore*. Then Covid hit and plans were put on hold. During the first lockdown and following the murder of George Floyd

and the waves of protest that grew around the world, Terry suggested that they make a different kind of record as a response to recent events. The trio started by picking some personal favourites. The Mothers of Invention's *Trouble Every Day* (Horace), Leonard Cohen's *Everybody Knows* (Terry), while Lynval was keen to sing Bob Marley's classic rebel song *Get Up, Stand Up* - this could be my second favourite version.

Other favourites included Talking Heads' *Listening Wind* and "*Trouble every day*" which was about the Watts Riots in 1965.

Spending months combing YouTube and books for songs they had never heard before, they discovered or rediscovered Big Bill Broonzy's angry 1938 blues *Black, Brown and White*, and the Staple Singers' stirring *Freedom Highway*, written for the marches from Selma to Montgomery in 1965.

The Dixie Jubilee Singers first recorded the spiritual *Ain't gonna let nobody turn us around* in 1924 but it was the Civil Rights Movement that tweaked the lyrics and made it an anthem. *Soldiers who want to be Heroes* is another example of a song that found its true calling after the fact. Written by the poet Rod McKuen in 1963, it was rerecorded three years later, during the dog days of the Vietnam war.

Folk singer Malvina Reynolds, best known for *Little Boxes*, provides two spiky odes to the contributions of ordinary people: *I live in a city* and *I don't mind failing in this world*. And because The Specials have always had a taste for black comedy, they've chosen two songs by bluesman Jerry McCain and Wild Thing writer Chip Taylor (*Fuck all the Perfect People*). "Terry said, 'I've found this song, listen to this,'" Horace remembers. "We all sat there open-mouthed."

The album was recorded in a studio in west London in May of 2021 with regular band-mates Nikolaj Torp Larsen on keyboards, Kenrick Rowe on drums and Steve Cradock on guitar. Hannah Hu, a young singer from Bradford, fronts *Listening Wind* and sings back-up on *Freedom Highway* and *Everybody Knows*. The Specials remain one of the most electrifying, influential and important bands of all time and this new record and the success of *encore* proves that they are every bit as relevant and vital as they were in 1979.

Buy this is your preferred format from <https://www.thespecials.com/> or your local independent record store – Amazon doesn't need you. If you don't have one google Resident Records in Brighton, who do mail-order and don't forget to drop in there next time the Lib Dems are in town. And of course, The Specials are touring in April, June and July, all things going well.

Syed Rankin' Rahman