

International Officer

2023 was an interesting and eventful International year.

In January I attended the Latin America Conference with the North West Delegation, this was held in London with many speakers from organisations in this country and other nations. This was interesting and informative regarding the political, economic and social situations in South America and the Caribbean Nations. In addition, information was given regarding some Government departments here and in other “ Western “ countries.

In March I attended the Auschwitz Study Tour with our first cohort of members. This was harrowing to see the things that were done to people that were deemed to be sub – human or undesirable. These included Jews, Roma, Communists, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Homosexuals. In addition mentally ill and disabled people were targeted. The tour was three full days of visits and information, lots of walking, and two travelling days. I was happy to recommend our Branch intention to send a group annually on this tour.

At the end of April, I had the honour of being the only Health Branch Representative on the North West International Delegation to Cuba. The last time this visit had occurred was 2008, and the last time someone from our Branch had attended was 1999. This was twelve days, including travel, packed with meetings and events. The one day without any meetings, on the Sunday, a day had been booked at a beach resort. This was very nice, the sea was lovely and warm for the start, then a tropical storm rolled in and we spent the rest of the day sheltering in the hotel. We attended an International Conference, at which the Cuban President gave an address, also an opening of an exhibition on revolutionary history at a children’s library. We met with members and officials from Workers Co – operatives, Education officers, Local Government members and Housing workers. We attended the Fire Station in Matanzas, at the request of the Fire Brigade Union, to present a plaque of solidarity following their loss of personell at a harbour fire, we were able to speak with one of the Firemen who was present at the event. Also we visited a Hospital in Matanzas and a Community Clinic for the Elderly in Havana, also a training facility for Doctors and Nurses undertaking foreign missions regarding trauma or disease. In addition we visited two schools, museums, a housing collective and were invited to evening events held by Community Groups. Alongside the timetabled requirements of our visit, it was very interesting to witness the level of poverty in Cuba, that I have only previously seen in Palastinian areas.

Other than these trips, I have attended many meetings regarding Venezuela, Brazil, Columbia and Palastine. Some of these have been held in Manchester, others have been on zoom from London. Also I have supported donations to disasters and conflict zones overseas. I hope to continue to support our International members, signposting them to Departments and Charities where appropriate, alongside my Representative duties.