

Ukraine Escalation Fears Rise

by our Eastern European Affairs correspondent

As Russian forces battle for control of the streets in central Bakhmut waves of Russian rockets and drones hit Kiev and other key Ukrainian cities last week in what the Kremlin says was a reprisal for a deadly Ukrainian commando attack across the border earlier in the month. Meanwhile, reports claiming that the Nord Stream pipelines were sabotaged by the Ukrainians have appeared in the American press and security forces say they've foiled a plot to kill the pro-Russian leader of Transnistria, a breakaway republic that lies between Moldova and Western Ukraine, that has been under Russian protection since the early 1990s.

Wagner forces, Russia's 'foreign legion', are fighting to root out Ukrainian troops dug-in in the ruins of Bakhmut with orders to delay the Russian advance for as long as possible regardless of the sacrifice. But the Ukrainian command has been blowing up bridges and pulling out their most experienced units from the city, which suggests a total withdrawal is imminent.

Russian troops now hold over half the city that once housed some 70,000 people before the war. Now virtually all have fled as a Russian ring of steel encircles the strategic hub of the Donetsk region in the Donbas.

Last week the *New York Times* reported, citing US officials and unspecified new intelligence, that a "pro-Ukrainian group" may have been behind the September attack that disabled Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines,

which were built to deliver Russian gas to Europe via Germany. The US paper's anonymous sources stressed that "no American or British nationals were involved" in the sabotage. Several German news outlets later claimed that German investigators had found that a yacht reportedly used in the attack belonged to a Polish-based firm, owned by two Ukrainians.

All this is being ridiculed in Moscow and the Ukrainians say they had nothing to do with blasts that shattered the pipelines. Kremlin press-secretary Dmitry Peskov described the reports in the US and German media as "a co-ordinated media hoax campaign" aimed at diverting attention from the actual "masterminds" of the sabotage.

In February veteran American investigative journalist Seymour Hersh said that US Navy divers had covertly planted explosives along the pipelines during a NATO exercise, which were detonated remotely two months later. The White House has denied the report by the Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter, calling it "utterly false and complete fiction". But many believe that this sort of sophisticated sabotage was way beyond the capabilities of



• winning the war of attrition

Ukrainian intelligence, and this is just a ruse to divert attention from the original Hersh report.

Meanwhile, in Transnistria, officially the Pridnestrovian Moldavian Republic, security forces foiled a plot to kill the breakaway republic's pro-Russian leader last week when they discovered a Land Rover packed with explosives set to explode as the motorcade of Transnistrian President Vadim Krasnoselsky passed through the centre of Tiraspol, the breakaway republic's capital. The local police say a man, believed to be Ukrainian intelligence agent, has been arrested.

The largely Russian-speaking enclave was once part of the Soviet republic of Moldova but broke away after Moldova proclaimed its independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The Transnistrians drove the Moldovans out in 1992 and set up their own republic un-

der a ceasefire guaranteed by a small Russian garrison and a joint peace-keeping force

of locals, Russians and Moldovans as well as 10 military observers from Ukraine.

FUND

Our lay-out man is still in hospital awaiting heart surgery but, as you can see, our volunteers are filling in and we are almost back to our old time-table. The February appeal closed sadly £612 short of our £3,500 target. The March fighting fund appeal starts now but not before we thank some of our supporters who rallied to the cause to keep our communist weekly going over the past few weeks. These include £80 from a long-standing reader in Essex, a further £150 from a Southall comrade, £100 from an Eastbourne reader and £30 from another in Sutton-in-Ashfield.

Fund-raising is a crucial part of all communist campaigning. Without it the *New Worker* could not survive. Bourgeois papers are funded through advertising. We have to rely on our supporters to bridge the gap between the nominal cover charge and the real cost of producing our 12-page weekly.

We are the only communist weekly in Britain. That's why we must keep going. But we can only do it with your help. All donations, big or small, help keep our presses rolling. Please send your donation to: *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the '*New Worker*'.

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here:

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Embracing Equality

The struggle for equal rights and the ending of all discrimination against women is re-affirmed every year on 8th March, International Women's Day. In the people's democracies and other parts of the Global South the day is genuinely celebrated to mark the end of feudal concepts and the emancipation of women, who Chairman Mao famously said "hold up half the sky". The day was adopted as a holiday for women's rights and world peace by the United Nations in 1977, but its origins go back to the early days of the modern socialist movement at the end of the 19th Century.

Marx and Engels wrote about the social situation of working women in their day. They focused on the exploitation of wage labour as well as the additional forms of inequality and oppression, exclusion and discrimination that were part and parcel of the capitalist system of oppression.

In 1911 the Second International Socialist Women's Conference established International Women's Day to demand the right to vote, to fight against sex discrimination in the workplace and to hold public office. All these aims were achieved by the Russian revolutionaries in 1917. International Women's Day became a public holiday in the first workers' and peasants' republic, and as Lenin put it; "the Soviet Republic of Russia promptly wiped out, without any exception, every trace of inequality in the legal status of women, and secured her complete equality in its laws."

Capitalism has nothing to offer working women except exploitation, oppression and poverty. The problems working women face today are rooted in the capitalist way of organising society and production according to the criterion of maximum capitalist profit. They cannot be solved by imperialist associations and institutions, business groups and governments.

That's why International Women's Day is barely recognised in the imperialist heartlands beyond the inevitable commercialisation used to sell goods to the 'women's' market. Likewise, bourgeois politicians all pay lip-service to its aims but they rarely go beyond their usual attempts to woo the 'women's' vote. When women's rights get a mention by the media gurus that serve the ruling class it is only as a tool for imperialist propaganda. They'll point to the lack of women's rights in Third World countries that defy the West – but ignore those of the feudal Arab oil princes and the servile dictators of South America that do the bidding of US imperialism. They'll elevate the problems of middle-strata women in breaking through the 'glass ceiling' of bourgeois society whilst routinely ignoring the problems of inequality, homelessness, unemployment, domestic violence, drink and drugs that hit working class women the hardest.

Many of the issues affecting women naturally also impact on men and the fight for equality for women is a crucial part of the class struggle. Inequalities sow divisions in the class when unity and solidarity are most needed.

The emancipation of women can only be achieved under socialism. Or as Lenin put it: "It is precisely the Soviet system, and the Soviet system only, that secures democracy. This is clearly demonstrated by the position of the working class and the poor peasants. It is clearly demonstrated by the position of women...the working women's movement has for its objective the fight for the economic and social, and not merely formal, equality of woman. The main task is to draw the women into socially productive labour, extricate them from 'domestic slavery', free them of their stultifying and humiliating resignation to the perpetual and exclusive atmosphere of the kitchen and nursery."

Braverman defies UN and Lineker over migrants

by James Tweedie

Britain's home secretary has vowed to push ahead with a crackdown on illegal immigration despite protests by the UN – and insults from football pundit Gary Lineker.

Rishi Sunak's government insists that it can tackle the people-trafficking crisis where its Tory predecessors have failed – and that they have the backing of the "law-abiding patriotic majority". But Vicky Tennant, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) representative to the UK, says the agency was "very concerned" at the legislation announced by Suella Braverman in the House of Commons.

The law would mean migrants arriving illegally – including on dangerously-overloaded people traffickers' boats across the English Channel – could be deported to their homeland or a third country.

Such deportees would have no right to claim political asylum or appeal under human rights legislation dating from the UK's membership of the EU, and would be banned from entering the UK again or applying for citizenship.

"This is effectively closing off access to asylum in the UK for people arriving irregularly," Tennant said in a TV news interview on Tuesday night. "We believe it's a clear breach of the Refugee Convention, and remember even people with very compelling claims will simply not have the opportunity to put these forward."

Her comments were a clear rejection of Braverman's assertion that the legislation would not breach the UK's commitments

under existing international treaties.

"We very strongly view our proposals as lawful," Braverman responded in a radio interview, stressing that the "simple truth is that we cannot accept everybody who wants to come".

She also predicted the draft legislation would help the government get a grip on illegal immigration, which saw more than 45,000 arrivals on small boats in 2022 alone.

"We will see, based on other countries' experiences, that once we're able to relocate people who've come here illegally from the United Kingdom to another safe country, like Rwanda, or back to their own home country, then, actually, the numbers of people making the journey in the first place will fall dramatically," the home secretary said.

Meanwhile several high-profile Tory MPs are calling on the BBC to discipline its top-paid football pundit and former England international, Gary Lineker, after he compared the government's small boats policy to anti-Semitic laws of Nazi Germany.

Lineker called the proposed legislation "beyond awful" in a post on his Twitter account – ironically decorated in support of the far-right Ukrainian regime. "This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s," he wrote, asking if "I'm out of order?".

The Home Secretary responded in a TV interview saying the commentator's comments were "disappointing."

"I think it's unhelpful to compare our measures, which are lawful, proportionate and – indeed – compassionate, to 1930s Germany," Braverman insisted.

When asked if Lineker – whose £1.35 million annual salary is funded with licence-payers' money – should resign or face the sack, she said: "That's a matter for the BBC and they will resolve that." But Braverman invited Lineker to visit the Channel ports to "see what the communities in Kent and Dover and actually all around the UK are feeling about this issue".

Former Immigration minister Robert Jenrick, whose Israeli-born wife is the daughter of Holocaust survivors, said such language "should not be thrown around lightly, especially when Gary Lineker is paid for by the British taxpayer". Jenrick added that it was "disappointing that he is so far out of step with the British public".

"Lineker's ignorant 'Nazi' comments have not only upset MPs – many in the Jewish community think it's crass while other broadcasters ask, 'Why is Lineker allowed to get away with it?' I do too," said backbencher Michael Fabricant.

"The BBC should disassociate themselves from these types of comments and ask themselves the question: 'Is this the type of comment they expect from their publicly funded presenters?'," said newly-appointed Conservative Party deputy chairman Lee Anderson.

"Instead of lecturing, Mr Lineker should stick to reading out the football scores and flogging crisps," he jibed in reference to Lineker's advertising work for Walker's snacks. "This is just another example of how out of touch these overpaid stars are with the voting public."

The BBC says Lineker will be "spoken to" and "reminded of his responsibilities".

Sputnik



Workers' Notes

Not Always a Rosy Retirement

by New Worker correspondent

Last week the Trades Union Congress produced a short report entitled *Creating a Healthy Labour Market, with a more helpful subtitle of Tackling the root causes of growing economic inactivity among older people*. Like many TUC reports it is a very mixed bag. It makes some useful points and recommendations, some of which are rather bland.

The report opens by noting that in recent years the number of people in the UK who are economically inactive has risen considerably, pointing out that there are now 440,000 more people of working age who are neither in work nor looking for work than there were three years ago when we still thought corona was a brand of beer.

These are generally older people, a fact which has led some to suggest that many people have decided voluntarily to take early retirement, cheerfully, or not, accepting a reduced income in exchange for more leisure time.

This, the TUC claims, is not the case. Instead, it reveals that ill-health is the problem, with 2.5 million out of work due to long-term ill-health. This is an increase of 340,000 since 2019, with 1.5 million over 50 years of age (hereafter referred to as older

workers). In all, over one-quarter (3.5 million people) aged 50–64 are currently economically inactive.

These are generally people in low-paying jobs. Two-thirds of inactive older workers had previously been in jobs in the five lowest-paid occupations, which account for four in 10 (40 per cent of) jobs.

This is confirmed by *Pensions Age*, the trade journal for the pensions business, which reports that over-50s in Britain who have been driven out of work for health reasons have a mere five per cent of the wealth of those who took early retirement by choice.

Whilst those who chose to retire have an average wealth of £1.24 million (which sounds a lot but includes houses and private pensions), for those who are out of work for ill health reasons the average wealth is only £57,000, slightly better-off at £137,000 are those who left work to look after family.

Wealth differences suggest older workers who are economically inactive due to illness or caring responsibilities are financially vulnerable, the report highlighted, and at current savings levels are unlikely to be able to afford a “moderate” standard of living in retirement.

Many older workers have left work early to take on caring responsibilities, particularly of elderly parents, a disproportionate number are unsurprisingly female workers.

The Tory Chancellor thinks that getting older workers back in work is essential “to harness the full potential of our country” and to “fix our productivity puzzle”, by which he means workers are not working hard enough.

The TUC welcome these

policies because assisting those older workers able and willing to work improves their material living standards and would improve mental and physical health.

It points out that to achieve the Chancellor’s objectives, a great deal needs to be done. The first priority is restoring the NHS by dealing with the recruitment and retention crisis to tackle the waiting list crisis, which is vital.

Instead of trying to force older workers back to work with benefit sanctions or increasing the state pension age, there must be good quality jobs, with flexibility to meet health conditions or juggling caring responsibilities.

More training is needed to allow older workers to keep their skills up to date or to reskill for new roles to increase their ability to remain in employment.

For those who are in fact too sick to work the TUC demands that the “safety net needs to be strengthened to prevent this resulting in severe hardship, and levels of workplace pension saving must be increased to give more people the financial resources to have control over how and when they stop paid work”.

The TUC points out that it is vital to deal with the NHS funding and recruitment crises. It notes that there is a waiting list of 7.2 million people, many of whom will be prevented from working for precisely those reasons. At the same time NHS England alone is short of almost 133,000 staff due to unfilled vacancies, with a vacancy rate of just under 10 per cent, due to staff fleeing to become shelf-stackers in Tesco. In social care it is even worse, with a shortage of 165,000 jobs. This is related to the fact that UK health spending is 18 per cent below the average in Europe.

Budget Day Actions

by New Worker correspondent

Next Wednesday, 15th March, which is coincidentally Budget Day, will hopefully see over half a million workers take strike action; some as part of on-going action and others for the first time.

Those involved include around 275,000 teachers belonging to the National Education Union (NEU) in England and Wales, around 125,000 civil servants belonging to PCS and Prospect will be joining them, along with University and College Union members. In London at least, getting to the picket line by tube will be difficult because members of the ASLEF and RMT unions will be on strike. Other rail workers and Royal Mail workers who have unfinished business will not be involved, but junior doctors will be taking what for them is the unusual step of strike action.

One-thousand journalists will be on strike at the BBC, which will be a very serious matter because we will not get instant coverage about what grim news the Chancellor has for the working class.

In Coventry there will be another ground-breaking strike at the notoriously anti-union Amazon warehouse where the GMB union has recently secured recognition.

In the Civil Service and government agencies Prospect members voted heavily for Wednesday’s action, this will be followed by a work-to-rule with overtime bans, from Thursday. With a 72 per cent turnout, 80 per cent of members voted for the strike and 92 per cent voted for action short of a strike. Those taking part are employed at the Met Office, the Defence and Science Technology Laboratory, the Health and Safety Executive, Trinity House, Intellectual Property Office, Animal and Plant Health Agency, Natural England, and UK Research and Innovation.

General Secretary Mike Clancy pointed out the necessity for action by saying: “Our members in the public sector have seen their incomes decline by up to 26 per cent over the past 13 years and their work taken for granted – they have had enough.

“Poor pay and declining morale represent an existential threat to the Civil Service’s ability to function, and to our ability to regulate and deliver on the government’s priorities.

“We will continue our campaign until the government comes up with a meaningful offer. If it doesn’t do so soon, we may be left with no Civil Service to protect.”

The 130,000 or so PCS members who are taking action that day are protesting about pay pensions and job security. The union is targeting specific departments

and agencies where it can make the greatest impact.

PCS claims this type of action was highly effective in the Border Force, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Authority (DVLA), the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Rural Payments Agency.

A second wave of action took place at the DWP in Liverpool, Bolton and Stockport this week. Later in the month, the British Museum and the Animal and Plant Health Agency, amongst others, will see industrial action.

Ballots are taking place at the Care Quality Commission (CQC), Companies House, National Museum of Wales, Office of Rail and Road, UK Export Finance and the Welsh Government, amongst others.

Bosses are worried enough to call the PCS ballot at HM Revenue and Customs into question, saying they had not given enough notice, which was nonsense.

PCS hopes for 1,000 picket lines on the day. In conjunction with the NEU, it is holding a march in London that leaves the Embankment at 12:30 for a rally at Downing Street before heading up the slight hill to Trafalgar Square. There will also be rallies in Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

At the Town Hall

by New Worker correspondent

In local government, Unite the union have firmly rejected the latest pay offer for workers in England.

In February local government employers made an offer ranging from 3.88 and 9.42 per cent for 2023/24, depending on grade – but with the real inflation rate (RPI) presently at 13.4 per cent this in fact amounts to a real-terms pay cut of almost 10 per cent. This was even worse than last year’s offer.

General Secretary Sharon Graham commented that: “Local government workers provide vital frontline services. They are now absolutely determined to fight for a pay increase that will not see their pay eroded by inflation for yet another year.

“Local government employers need to enter into full pay negotiations and make a decent pay offer if industrial action is to be avoided.”

Clare Keogh, the sector’s national local government officer, added: “Local government employers need to recognise that there is growing anger among local government workers about the way they are treated year after year in pay negotiations. If the employers want to avoid industrial action they need to make a much improved offer. It is as simple as that.”

What happens next will depend on the outcome of further talks with the bosses and the other unions involved, Unison and GMB.



NCP leader Andy Brooks joined London comrades protesting outside the south Korean embassy in London last weekend. The picket called by the Korean Friendship Association (KFA) was to protest against the forthcoming war exercises and the current wave of repression unleashed in south Korea against the people by the US puppet regime. KFA Chair Dermot Hudson in his address exposed the fascist and repressive nature of south Korea citing the recent raid on the HQ of the south Korean Confederation of Trade Unions as well as arrests of leftist and progressive activists. He stressed that south Korea is a puppet regime with no legitimacy, a creation of the US imperialists and that south Korea is simply the occupied southern half of the DPRK.

Steps Forward or Delaying Tactics?

by New Worker correspondent

Progress has been made in at least one of the pay disputes affecting the NHS. Strikes involving 32,000 ambulance workers that have been taking place in different NHS regions have been called off.

Unison announced the suspension of action due last Wednesday after the Department of Health and Social Care confirmed there would be additional investment in pay for both this year (2022/23) and next (2023/24).

Sara Gorton, the union's head of health, optimistically said: "Unions said all along they could pause strikes if ministers would only commit to formal talks to boost pay for this year."

"The government has finally

promised extra investment in pay for both this and next year.

"The sad thing is this could all have been handled so differently. Proper pay talks should have started months ago, long before the first strike was called. That would have avoided days of disruption for the NHS and its patients."

This is a huge shift from the Government, who for months have refused to consider negotiations on pay.

She also warned that: "However, when we get in the room, we'll quickly learn whether the talks can be meaningful. If not, Unison will be forced to resume strike action. Nobody wants that."

GMB, Unite and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

have also suspended action.

In announcing its suspension of action, Unite head of operations Gail Cartmail also warned that: "If the meeting doesn't meet these assurances strike action will resume."

The assurances relate to a confirmation that any deal will include new money rather than placing further pressure on NHS budgets, and an indication that discussions about "efficiencies" and "productivity savings" will not result in attacks on the conditions of NHS staff.

Rachel Harrison of GMB welcomed the move in a belated letter from the Secretary of State for Health, Steve Barclay, inviting unions to pay talks.

She said "This is a huge shift from the Government, who for months have refused to consider negotiations on pay."

"The Government has given assurances of additional cash for both years above existing budgets and that any deal will respect the existing Agenda for Change structure."

"GMB's ambulance workers have agreed to suspend industrial action so talks can begin – however the strike will return with a vengeance should talks break down."



The two main tools of the US and its allies to crush countries that dare to challenge its hegemony are its armed forces and economic sanctions. Since the end of the Cold War in 1991, the US has carried out 251 military interventions (compared with 218 operations in the 200 years prior).

At the LSE

by New Worker correspondent

At the London School of Economics (LSE), which older readers will recall was founded by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, authors of an

important history of British trade unions, management have acted viciously towards the leader of the 2017 strike by cleaners.

Jamaican-born Mildred Simpson, a member of the small non-TUC union United Voices of

the World (UVW), is a cleaner with 21 years of service at the LSE, where she successfully led a strike that saw the ending of outsourcing. Now she is facing disciplinary action on very flimsy grounds, with the aim of getting her sacked just before she reaches retirement age.

Her alleged offence was to leave her post 15 minutes before the end of her shift on no less than three times in over two years.

This, as she correctly points out, is "all down to bullying and victimisation. I feel that they've been targeting me for years."

Like many low-paid workers she has effectively two jobs at the LSE: first as a cleaner from 6am to 8:30am, and later as a janitor from 9am to 5pm. That long day is even longer because although her shift starts at 6am, she is "in LSE every morning from around 5:15am because I'm a team leader and I want to have enough time before my actual shift starts so everything is ready before my team arrives".

As a reward for her trade union activities: "I've had several meetings about minor issues which have fizzled out without any result, but this constant picking on me seemed to intensify after our successful strike against outsourcing. I suspect this repetitive singling out has to do far more with my union activities than anything else."

She has also complained about understaffing that bosses interpret as her not being able to do her job properly, which she feels is unfair.

As result of the stress from this victimisation she has been signed off sick by her doctor and had go to counselling to be able to cope.

Despite this she remains de-

fiant and advises any workers in a similar position to "keep your spirits up, keep your strength up, because we, in the union, support each other. Whatever they are doing to us, we are not standing down".

It is a pity that small street unions such as UVW are necessary. They are essentially the result of the big general unions Unite, Unison and GMB failing to organise the migrant workers who make up the majority of

"keep your spirits up, keep your strength up, because we, in the union, support each other. Whatever they are doing to us, we are not standing down"

cleaning workers. They have the resources to do so, but many of their recruitment campaigns begin and end with a photo-shoot with the General Secretary instead of the sustained work necessary. Amongst the TUC unions, only RMT have deployed their resources in this direction.

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

New Worker
14 March 2003

THE FIRE Brigades Union (FBU) last week rejected a new pay offer from employers in their long-running dispute because it was "considerably worse than the understandings reached last November, which the Government subsequently ruled out".

The union is now considering further strike action, which could coincide with the attack on Iraq. Military resources will be stretched and it will be difficult for the Government to deploy troops to cover for the firefighters on strike.

The FBU is still hoping that last ditch talks with Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott may produce a better offer.

A recall conference will be held in Brighton on 19th March, which could sanction new strikes.

The FBU said the new offer "effectively treats with contempt the FBU ballot result of nine to one in favour of rejecting the four per cent offer made last September.

The employers have offered that same four per cent, back-dated to September, and then average pay increases of seven per cent from November 2003.

There are conditions attached to this increase, including accepting casualised duty systems. Not all firefighters will get the seven per cent because it is linked to a new role structure whilst others will get more than seven per cent.

The FBI says: "This is an unacceptable attempt to divide the FBU members."

Retained (part-time) members will be offered the principle

of parity – but not before next November.

Control staff will face a job evaluation exercise before they can make progress towards equal pay.

Management will be give power to determine duty shifts at each location within a framework of an average 42-hour basic week.

This will undermine national agreements of terms and conditions.

Firefighters would be obliged to accept deployment anywhere and on any duties "appropriate to their competence".

The union leadership has recommended members reject these divisive conditions and that as many as possible attend branch meetings in the coming weeks ahead of the national recall conference.

The FBU says they are standing by for a smear campaign in the press accusing them of being unpatriotic if they fight on against this offer.

Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' Speech in Perspective

by Scott Ritter

On 5th March 1946, Winston Churchill arrived in the small town of Fulton, Missouri.

Some seven months earlier, Churchill had been voted out of the office of prime minister that he had held for the five most tumultuous years in the history of Great Britain, during which the UK contributed to defeat Nazi Germany. Churchill was accompanied by Harry Truman, the former Missouri senator who had served as President Franklin D Roosevelt's vice president until Roosevelt's death on 12th April 1945 propelled him into the role of the USA's commander-in-chief. Truman had arranged for Churchill to receive an honorary degree from Westminster College, after which the famously loquacious English politician would deliver an address.

The US president's motivations were two-fold. First, he sought to lift the sagging spirits of a wartime ally whom he had only met in passing at the summit in Potsdam, Germany, in July–August 1945, after the surrender of Nazi Germany. Churchill had arrived in Potsdam distracted by the prospects of being voted out of office. He was deeply depressed, refusing to read the briefing documents his staff had prepared for him, resulting in lengthy and disjointed dialogue with his counterparts. Churchill's fears were realised when, with the conference still in session, the results of the British elections were announced – Churchill had been defeated and his place at the conference was taken over by the new British prime minister, Clement Attlee.

Churchill took the defeat poorly, sinking further into depression as his health failed him, leaving him struggling to find his place in the world. He vacationed in France, where he spent hours painting. Upon his return to Britain, Churchill busied himself by working on his wartime memoir. Despite his defeat as prime minister, Churchill remained a member



• Churchill kicks off the Cold War at Fulton

of Parliament, and as such he was a leader of the opposition. Politics was in his blood and eventually the former prime minister began to re-engage in the affairs of the nation, which included casting a critical eye towards post-war relations with the Soviet Union, whose leader at the time, Joseph Stalin, Churchill openly mistrusted.

At the time Truman extended his invitation to

Churchill, American policy towards its wartime ally, the Soviet Union, was in a flux. Stalin's refusal to participate in the post-war dollar-dominated economy outlined in the 1944 Bretton Woods agreement was viewed by many as proof positive of the anti-Western proclivities of the Soviet Union. This posturing, when combined with angst over Soviet post-war policies in Poland, which

both Truman and Churchill viewed as breaking with agreements reached during both the Yalta and Potsdam summits, had led to an overall environment of distrust and disengagement.

A speech delivered by Stalin on 9th February 1946 sent shock-waves through the American public, driven by media accounts which lambasted the presentation as "warlike" despite the fact

that it almost exclusively addressed domestic matters. A US diplomat in Moscow, George Kennan, initially shrugged off Stalin's address as being routine in nature. Upon receiving instructions from the US State Department to provide a more detailed analysis of the speech and what it said about Soviet attitudes toward the West, however, Kennan proceeded to write an 8,000-word report that became known as 'the long telegram'.

The 'long telegram' was dispatched on 22nd February and soon it became the talk of the town in Washington. Churchill was in the USA vacationing in Florida when Kennan's missive was written, and was subsequently invited to travel to the US Capitol to visit with Truman before heading to Fulton, Missouri. He was sequestered by the US president and his secretary of state, James F Byrnes, to discuss the themes Churchill would present in his address. Both Truman and Byrnes were sensitive to the vagaries of US public opinion, which had not yet been turned against the Soviet Union and its leader, whom many Americans still considered an ally. By inviting Churchill to speak in Fulton, Truman hoped to use the famous Englishman's oratory skills to his advantage to help shape American attitude regarding the need for a more confrontational posture vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

Churchill did not disappoint. In a speech he titled *The Sinews of Peace*, Churchill outlined his vision of post-war reality, one where the USA and the British Commonwealth enjoyed a "special relationship" designed to guide the international community in confronting the growing threat posed by the Soviet Union. In typical fashion, Churchill crafted words that graphically captured his sentiments, including the sentence "from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent", which introduced



• Stalin and Churchill when Britain and the Soviet Union fought together

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the term “iron curtain” into the lexicon of American discourse regarding the Soviet Union.

The Iron Curtain speech, as it subsequently became known, was a defining moment in history and has become known as the event that defined the start of what became known as the Cold War, an existential

West and was appalled when the Truman Doctrine became policy.

The policy journey that saw the ‘long telegram’ transformed into the foundational doctrine of US containment policy, however, passed through Fulton, Missouri, where the words of Winston Churchill’s historic address served as an ideological forge,

a doctrine of global confrontation, the current Cold War is the by-product of deliberate actions by those in the so-called ‘collective West’ who seek to hold onto the post-war world shaped by the containment policies that defined the Cold War by resurrecting the same irrational fears that had been generated under Truman.

a ‘special relationship’ with the UK, no longer reigns supreme. The British stopped being relevant years ago, and the allure of America as the ‘shining city on the hill’ has long since faded.

The premise of the original Cold War was based upon a flawed perception of malign Soviet intent, the notion that Stalin was consolidating his power behind an ideological Iron Curtain until which time he could sortie forth and bring the rest of Europe, and by extension, the world, under his sway. Today, one can see the echoes of this Cold War mindset in the way so-called ‘Russia experts’, such as Michael McFaul and Fiona Hill, articulate the policies and posture of modern-day Russia and its leader, President Vladimir Putin. Just as a negative Soviet reaction to the global economic prescriptions of the Bretton Woods agreement led to George Kennan’s misinterpretation of Soviet intent, the Russian reaction to the expansion of NATO to its borders is likewise being misinterpreted – deliberately so – by McFaul, Hill and others as a sign of Russian aggression.

The main difference between the present and the past is the fact that despite its flawed intellectual foundation, the original containment

policy assiduously avoided having the Cold War’ transition into a ‘hot’ conflict. Today, whilst historians and current affairs analysts debate whether the current state of affairs between the USA and Russia qualifies as a new Cold War, the aggressive containment-based policies that are manifest in the expansion of NATO have morphed away from restraining Russia into defeating Russia. As such, the Russian–Ukrainian conflict that has resulted from this aggressive expansion of NATO has transformed into a proxy ‘hot war’ between Russia and the US-led NATO alliance, which is unlike anything experienced during the Cold War. As such, the current state of US–Russian relations is not defined by competing ideologies but rather brute-force politics, where one side (the USA) seeks the physical destruction of the other (Russia).

This is the legacy of Churchill’s famous address, where Cold War rhetoric has transformed into post-Cold War conflict. The only good news is that US power and prestige today is but a shadow of what it was when the Cold War originated. Back then, the allure of US democracy marketed using the Bretton Woods-enhanced dollar-dominated global economy was real.

Today, US democracy has been exposed as a flawed dream that, in many ways, manifests itself as a nightmare. The ‘Iron Curtain’ has been transformed into an American ‘Rust Belt’ where the promise of the past has failed to meet the expectation of the present.

The fact is, there will be no ‘Cold War 2.0’, if for the simple fact that the world will not allow it. Rather than enabling a modern-day variation of the Churchillian ideological divide envisioned in his Iron Curtain speech, the international community seems to prefer to resolve the differences between Russia and the collective West in a more deliberative fashion, choosing compromise over conflict.

All that is needed is for the US-led collective West to recognise the reality of the world today and drop the pretence of Cold War posturing built on Winston Churchill’s flawed and dated oration. Sadly, the ongoing tragedy that is unfolding in Ukraine today is proof positive that such a realisation has yet to be reached. The consequences of this failure are real, and meaningful, and are propelling US–Russian relations on a trajectory that bypasses the niceties of Cold War containment into the horrors of Hot War conflict.

Sputnik



• 1948 revolution in Prague

struggle defined more by ideology than force of arms between a Western world led by the ‘special relationship’ between the USA and Britain, and those lands ensconced behind the Iron Curtain that fell under the sway of the Soviet Union. Truman went on to use the themes set forth in Churchill’s speech and Kennan’s ‘long telegram’ to craft a formal policy known as the Truman Doctrine, which was announced to the US Congress on 12th March 1947 – nearly a year after Churchill’s landmark address. The policy announced as the primary goal of US policy the containment of Soviet power and influence around the world.

And so began the Cold War, born from the confluence of one man’s depression and another man’s indecision. The irony, however, is that the aggressive policy of containment, based as it was on military power, was not something Kennan was advocating for when he wrote the ‘long telegram’. Kennan did not believe the Soviet Union to be either expansionistic or militaristic in its approach towards the

transforming Truman’s uncertainty over the state of relations with his erstwhile wartime ally into a stark determination to confront Soviet power that, thanks to Churchill, was subsequently deemed a threat to international peace and security.

And so began the Cold War, born from the confluence of one man’s depression and another man’s indecision.

Today, the USA and its allies find themselves on the cusp of a new ‘Cold War’ with Russia. Unlike the original, which was born of the nexus between Churchillian depression and Truman indecision that twisted the intellectual musings of a US diplomat into

But the world was a different place during the original Cold War, defined by two different approaches towards global relations that were shaped by which side of the Churchillian Iron Curtain one resided. The USA and its allies were able to prevail for a number of reasons, including their ability to sow dissent within the ranks of the Soviet-dominated Eastern bloc, driving a wedge between Moscow and Beijing, and undermining Soviet influence and control over Eastern Europe.

Today, the world isn’t defined by a bipolar West-versus-East reality, but rather a more complex, and highly nuanced multipolarity, where the USA’s continued adherence to Cold War mentalities places it at a disadvantage when dealing with a world that has, for the most part, moved on from the limitations imposed by any articulation of an Iron Curtain. Indeed, the USA’s continuing embrace of Churchillian concepts has transformed the Iron Curtain into a self-imposed prison, isolating the USA from a growing global reality where the American singularity, enhanced by



• 1950 US imperialism attacks Democratic Korea (mural)

Biden's war drive fuels resistance

by John Catalinotto

In the week of the first anniversary of the US/NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the Biden administration has taken or announced steps to prolong that war and risk its escalation. The corporate media has parroted and amplified every government announcement. And the anti-war movement began to respond.

President Joe Biden made a quick trip by rail into Kiev on 20th February, where he met Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to prop up his shaky regime. Biden offered the US puppet \$500 million in arms and ammunition.

Quickly back by rail to Warsaw, Biden told reporters at the Royal Castle in the Polish capital that there would be “hard and bitter days ahead”, and before returning to Washington he promised that Washington and its NATO allies would “have Ukraine’s back”, which implies more Ukrainians will die at the front.

On 24th February the Pentagon announced a new aid package for Ukraine, committing \$2 billion to send more rounds of ammunition and a variety of small, high-tech drones into the slaughter. The aid includes the upgraded Switchblade 600 Kamikaze drone, as well as electronic warfare detection equipment. The USA has now committed more than \$32 billion in weapons in the last year, according to an Associated Press report.

Washington also opened a diplomatic and propaganda offensive. An anti-Russia vote in the United Nations General Assembly had more or less the same results as similar calls last year. Whilst 141 countries voted to condemn, including the historic colonialist countries in Europe, North America, Japan and



• Anti-war protests in Germany

Australia, the 39 countries voting against or abstaining included those with the largest populations.

When the Chinese government proposed a perfectly reasonable framework for negotiations, Washington responded as if Beijing’s proposal was a declaration of war. Biden immediately dismissed it. His reaction sent the

to now, the governments – including all NATO members – have aligned with the USA’s pro-war line. Although this deluge of propaganda blunted the response of organisations and parties that are usually anti-war – such as the Linke Party in Germany, for example – there were indications within the working class of a growing distrust of the US/NATO official arguments. The closer to the front line, the greater the worry about the war.

Pro-war forces exploited the one-year anniversary to organise support for the war. Anti-war actions in most countries were stronger than they had been.

The USA has now committed more than \$32 billion in weapons in the last year, according to an Associated Press report.

Growing resistance

In Germany, a key supporter of the US/NATO war, the first mass anti-war demonstrations under left leadership hit the streets. Tens of thousands of Germans attended the *Uprising for Peace* mass rally in Berlin on 25th February. The rally’s main spokespeople were Die Linke (Left Party) politician Sahra Wagenknecht and author Alice Schwarzer.

Die Linke has serious divisions regarding the war in Ukraine, which has held back the anti-war movement up to now.

The demonstrators called upon the Social Democratic-led coalition

anti-war protests

Demonstrations also took place in various cities of Portugal and smaller actions in Britain.

As important as these anti-war protests were, an even greater sign of working-class resistance has been the growing number of major strike actions in Germany, Italy, Spain, Portugal and especially in Britain and France. These are a response to the decades of encroachments on workers’ standards of living and the special sacrifices demanded by a war that is not in the interest of the workers.

In the USA, too, workers have been in motion for the last two years, much more so than previously, with young workers questioning government policies on all fronts. And the anti-war movement has called for national actions on 18th March, with the central action at 1pm at the White House in Washington.

This action unites all forces on the left that have been agitating for an end to NATO’s aggression in Europe and worldwide and battling the US use of economic sanctions – another form of war.

Workers World (USA)



• Anti-war protest outside the German embassy in Vienna

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

Since the fall of the Soviet Union unipolar domination in the form of US hegemony has resulted in brutal aggression, often by proxy, throughout the world. A long list of countries have faced death and destruction. Whilst enthusiastically supporting NATO's war project in Ukraine, the second-rate imperialist powers in Europe have themselves fallen victim to US strategy. Their weakened economies have been hit further by the greatest terrorist attack since 9/11. The respected American journalist, Seymour Hersh (known for his exposure of the My Lai massacre), has confirmed that it was the USA and NATO behind the Nord Stream 2 explosions. The resultant five-fold increase in natural gas prices has added to the capitalist economic crisis.

Any country that has sought to develop freely

and independently of US interests has faced threats, direct invasion, engineered regime change or crippling sanctions. Hopefully this reign of terror may soon end. Dramatic changes are taking place as the world moves to a new multipolar order.

There are a number of reasons for the new situation. The first is that Imperialism's gleefully predicted collapse of the all remaining socialist countries following the fall of the Soviet Union did not occur. Those bastions of socialism, namely People's China, The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba, Vietnam and Laos, are all thriving as they stand firm, politically and economically. China, in particular, has become the workshop of the world, with a stable and expanding economy that is able to resist whatever steps the USA takes against it.

Secondly, capitalism has reached an acute phase of its terminal decline. Economic stagnation, failing public services and business failures leading to unemployment, foodbanks, homelessness and despair are all symptoms of a very sick social system. People are starting to say "enough is enough" and to question the imperialist narrative.

Thirdly are the dramatic geopolitical changes that are taking place on the international

scene. The growing importance of the emerging economies of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) together with the Belt and Road Initiative and other trading blocs free from US domination, is having a positive impact. The notorious petro-dollar is increasingly being abandoned as a growing number of countries are starting to trade in local currencies. A major sell-off of US debt bonds is also underway.

Desperate US diplomats tour the world as they embark upon crusades to stir up trouble between different countries. They seek to divide and rule by provoking border disputes and inflaming nationalist passions. They seek to provoke wars that they can then exploit to their own advantage. They are however, increasingly being told politely to go home. Those weak bourgeois leaders who follow US orders without question are allowing themselves to become detached from the dynamic new world order.

The world is in a period of great change. People who have suffered from the austerity and hardships imposed by bourgeois governments have had enough. Emerging nations are starting to resist US hegemony as they strive for free and independent development. Communists endeavour to expose the failings of capitalism and encourage the workers of the world to stand up and fight for a better world. A socialist world.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Dear Comrades

On the eve of International Women's Day, the Bahraini court of appeals didn't bother waiting for the conclusion of trial proceedings to jail Mrs Fadilah Abdelrasul and her family members. The court locked up the 53-year-old, her husband Radhi Ali Musa and brother-in-law Jaafar Ali Musa, until their next court hearing on 13th March. They were accused of giving shelter to their son, who was wanted by the torturers.

Meanwhile, in a serious snub to Bahrain's ruling family the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has issued its findings on the feudal Arab kingdom. The Committee is "concerned at the shrinking civic space for women human rights defenders and reports of intimidation, harassment, threats, physical abuse, sexual violence". It urged Bahrain to further strengthen and enforce measures to protect women human rights defenders, including journalists and political opposition members, from acts of reprisals.

Members of parliament from around the world attending this year's Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in Bahrain should use the assembly to raise concerns about the serious repression of human rights in the country, 22 organisations including Human Rights Watch said on 6th March in a joint letter. The 146th IPU Assembly will take place Bahrain from 11–15th March 2023. "We urge you to ensure that the IPU's 146th Assembly will not be used by the Bahraini authorities to whitewash its dismal

rights record," the groups said in the letter.

Although the F1 car race in Bahrain has ended, its political fallouts are continuing. Human Rights Watch said: "Formula 1's new season is starting in Bahrain – where authorities have a track record of serious human rights abuses. F1 claims it can be a force for change, but instead F1 is complicit in sports-washing. Don't race to repression."

More than 20 organisations, including Human Rights Watch and the Bahrain Institute for Rights & Democracy, asked F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali to press the Bahraini government to release political prisoners and to meet with victims of abuses directly linked to the Bahrain Grand Prix. The F1 race is itself linked to human rights abuses that have not been addressed. Despite promising to conduct human rights assessments, F1 has not engaged with Amnesty over human rights concerns.

Bahraini victims of repression, resulting from the F1 event, have continued. Four people were arrested near the Bahrain Grand Prix on Sunday for peacefully protesting and demanding the release of political prisoners. Former political prisoners Hajer Mansoor and Najah Yusuf were amongst those arrested. Yusuf said they were then "treated inhumanely" by a senior police officer. "The officer described us as criminals, belittled and disrespected us with such an inappropriate description," Najah Yusuf said. She added: "For protesting F1 in 2017, I was beaten, tortured and served two years in prison." The two Bahraini women were imprisoned and tortured in 2017 after protesting against Formula One's (F1's) presence in the kingdom.

John Hughes

Bahrain Freedom Movement
London

Diary

UNTIL 31 MARCH
Victoria and Albert Museum: Ospaaal: Solidarity and Design: Cuban posters supporting Third World movement. Cromwell Road, London SW7
SAT 11 MAR
Working Class Movement Library: Shirley Baker Photographing Salford. Exhibition. Wed-Fri afternoons. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX
SAT 11 MAR
NHS SOS: Act now to save our NHS! National Demonstration. 12:00, Assemble at Warren Street Tube, Tottenham Court Road, London, NW1 3AA.
WED 15 MAR
National Education Union: Save our Schools demonstration 12:30, Assemble Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London W2 for march to carnival in Trafalgar Square.
SAT 18 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Book Sale. 11:00-15:00 MML.
SAT 18 MAR
Stand Up To Racism: Resist Racism. Demonstrations at City Hall Cardiff, 11:00; George Square, Glasgow 11:00; and BBC, Portland Place, London 12:00.
MON 20 MAR –
WED 26 MAR
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Israeli Apartheid Week 2023. Nationwide campaign at universities and colleges in support of cancelling investments in Israel. Includes Lobby of Parliament on Weds 22.
WED 22 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Thomas Kuczynski on his New Edition of Marx's Capital Vol 1. 19:00. Online. Book via MML website.
WED 22 MAR
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Viva La Educación acoustic music fundraiser, 19:30-22:00. The Casa, Hope Street Liverpool L1 9BP £5.00

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

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**Scottish
Political
News**

by our Scottish political
affairs correspondent

With the Coronation coming up the English tabloids continue to speculate on the seating arrangements for Prince Harry and his American wife, but north of the border the burning question for at least one Scot is whether the Stone of Scone should return to Westminster for the crowning of King Charles III.

That Scot is Alex Salmond, the famed former SNP leader who parted company with the nationalist mainstream in 2018 to later set up his own Alba party in 2021. Salmond says the Stone of Destiny, a block of sandstone used for crowning Scottish kings that was taken by English soldiers in 1296 and placed under the throne of England, should remain in Scotland whence it was returned in 1996. Salmond says the stone should be withheld in protest at Scotland being denied another independence referendum and at least one contender for the SNP crown, Ash Regan, agrees with him.

"While I appreciate the tradition of using the Stone of Destiny in the Coronation," Ms Regan told the *Scottish Mail on Sunday*, "I believe it should remain in Scotland as an ancient symbol of our national heritage. I suggest a compromise in which the aspects of the Coronation ceremony involving the Stone take place in Scotland so that it can be celebrated in its rightful place, without needing to be removed from the country."

SNP leadership

Meanwhile the SNP leadership continues, with the three contenders and their supporters trading the usual insults and allegations that go along with these elections.

Some say the race has been fixed by SNP HQ to favour Health Secretary Humza Yousaf. Last week SNP MSP Emma Harper was forced to apologise after breaking party rules when she used a list of party members to send an email supporting Yousaf. His publicity material uses the same fonts and styles as official SNP materials to add credence to the suggestion that HQ regard the election as a dreary process

to be gone through solely for the sake of appearances.

Former British diplomat Craig Murray is a leading proponent of this view. After all, the contest is being overseen by Mr Sturgeon himself, who remains in post as the SNP's CEO despite calls for his resignation from leading SNP figures such as Ms Sturgeon's old enemy Joanna Cherry MP. That the CEO is likely to be interviewed under caution by the Police into a personal loan to the SNP which could have come from a joint account only adds to suspicions.

Allegations have also been made that the eight regional hustings meetings have been rigged by holding them in small venues and that ticketing arrangements were such that known Yousaf supporters got precedence. That ensures that only 3,500 out of a claimed membership of 100,000 will be able to take part. The fact that some constituency chairs were shut out has added to that suspicion. Originally the media were going to be barred, but after protests they were allowed in. The brief, low-budget campaign (only £5,000 per candidate) has also been designed to favour Yousaf, some claim, because he is better known and it meant the rivals had less time to plan their campaigns and he had less time to put his foot in it.

The vote will be conducted online, which has only increased the levels of paranoia. This was increased, rather than allayed, by the news that SNP HQ has responded to a warning from the Government's electronic spy agency, the General Communications HQ (GCHQ), that those damned Ruskies could rig the poll, by saying they would work with GCHQ's National Cyber Security Centre to deal with the alleged problem.

Even the SNP die-hards have to concede it is hardly a battle of the giants. Highlights so far have included challenger Ash Regan blaming the strong Tory support in the south of Scotland on the fact that area does not get Scottish Television, and instead received Borders TV from Carlisle. She seems to be Alex Salmond's favoured choice (although he also said kind things about Kate Forbes), but it remains to be seen whether that endorsement is a blessing or curse.

On the other hand, the continuity candidate Humza Yousaf has had to back-track on his National Care Service plans, which have come under fire from many quarters including SNP councillors fearful of losing control to Edinburgh.

Both women candidates have annoyed the Greens by making noises in favour of North Sea oil and gas, and horror of horrors, widening roads...

**Sorry about
the delay**

Back in the real world, the nationalisation of ScotRail last April has not, it seems, been a resounding success.

The official Public Performance Measure (PPM) shows that the number of trains arriving within five minutes of booked time was 90.3 per cent in 2021 under the much-derided Dutch franchise holder Abellio. Since then, it has slipped back slightly to 88.4 per cent. From this traveller's experience it is nearer 10 per cent because many of the trains on his local route look as though they had escaped from the National Railway Museum. ScotRail's own figures for January say a quarter of all trains were late at no fewer than 77 out of 83 terminus stations listed.

Some £137,309 was spent on taxis for irate commuters due to cancelled or delayed trains in the first six months of nationalisation.

Some blame the bosses, which include a CEO on £180,000 who was a Human Resources big wig and a £115,000 communications director who tells people their trains have been delayed or cancelled.

Mick Hogg, the RMT rail union's regional official, remarked that: "It's no different since nationalisation. They talk about a new dawn from April 1st last year but I can't see it."

He added that: 'Industrial relations are an absolute disaster. Just like Abellio, they can't negotiate. We have pay talks pending but you can bet your bottom dollar they won't be able to do anything unless

they have the authority of the Scottish Government."

The rail services are a picture of health compared to the situation with regard to the ferries, however, which remarkably is getting even worse rather than better.

**Not what they
used to be...**

A potential drug scandal is rocking a traditional Scottish sport. Shinty, a vicious form of hockey widely and wildly played in the Highlands and Islands, will now see players face random drugs tests during the coming season that has just started. This had previously only been done in cup finals and internationals in the 1990s and 2000s.

The problem is not performance-enhancing drugs says the sport's governing body, the Camanachd Association, according to the *West Highland Free Press*, but rather is 'recreational' drug use.

In the good old days, the game was complemented by lots of whisky consumed by players and spectators. Now, as John Wallace, a GP who is involved as a medic in the sport, says, "we need to live with the reality that the drugs are there, people will use them and how society and the health system responses to that is the challenge for us," adding that: "Shinty provides a positive alternative to drug use." The captain of Beaulieu agreed, saying: "Drug use is a big thing in Scotland, and maybe it will get guys to think twice about doing it."

It has been suggested that Shinty would make a better national sport than football because the national football team is such rubbish and playing in a sport with no international competition apart from Ireland and Nova Scotia in Canada, Scotland could win occasionally.

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Watchers on the Wall

By Tao Zihui

"I pledge my life and honour to the Night's Watch, for this night and all nights to come," vowed members of the Night's Watch in *Game of Thrones*, the epic TV series based on George RR Martin's classic fantasy novels, as they dedicated their lives to defending the ice wall in the novels.

Like them, British Beijing resident William Lindesay has devoted his life to the defence of a great northern wall of epic proportions. This wall is real however – and so is its need for protection.

The Great Wall, which has a total length of more than 21,000 km and stands as a symbol of the Chinese nation, has been the subject of numerous legends over the centuries. After becoming the first foreigner to traverse the main length of the wall on foot 36 years ago, Lindesay has been working to protect this icon of world heritage and is now a real-life 'watcher of the wall'.

On 6th December 2022, Lindesay's two sons James and Thomas, aged 28 and 21, posted a then-and-now picture on Twitter with the caption "36 years apart". The composite image shows Lindesay 36 years ago, standing in front of the Old Dragon's Head, where it reaches the sea at Beidaihe in Qinhuangdao city, Hebei province, and his sons standing in the same spot now.

After setting out from

the Taolai River near the Jiayuguan Fortress in Gansu Province on 15th July 2022, the brothers arrived at the Old Dragon's Head at Shanhaiguan on the shoreline of the Bohai Bay on 22nd November 2022, completing a record-breaking 3,263 km journey running along the main west-to-east length of the wall. They are the first known brothers, and Thomas the youngest person, to succeed in running the stretch of wall in one continuous journey.

"During my father's Great Wall adventure in 1987, my future parents met in Beijing, and then it was mother's charms that convinced him to make China their home, and the Great Wall their life's joint work, and that's a passion my brother and I have inherited," Thomas said.

The brothers say they decided to make the journey in tribute to the one that made their father a sensation 36 years ago.

A long road

Villagers living at the foot of the wall often see the tall, silver-haired foreigner collecting plastic bottles and other garbage as he passes by in the course of photographing, studying, and protecting the structure.

"It began actually in the 1960s, when I saw the symbol for the Great Wall on the map of China at school. The dream of the Great Wall for me began when I was 11," Lindesay said.

Coming from Wallasey on Merseyside, Lindesay first travelled to China in 1986 and set out on

his 78-day journey from Jiayuguan to Shanhaiguan in 1987.

"From the perspective of a foreigner, you will see different things," he said. According to Lindesay, local people, perhaps, become accustomed to seeing the Great Wall every day, but for him every section of the wall is fresh and has a story.

As the most successful foreign explorer of the Great Wall, Lindesay has been conducting systematic research on the structure since 1994.

To facilitate his research, Lindesay and his wife Wu Qi moved into a farmyard in a village at the foot of the Jiankou section of the wall in 1998.

Located in Huairou district on the outskirts of Beijing, the Jiankou section is one of the most dangerous parts of the Great Wall and is known by hikers as "the wild Great Wall", a term invented by Lindesay many years ago that later became a proper term. He has travelled all over the wild Great Wall, some sections of which are buried in soil and can only be identified from the air.

Despite its status as a precious cultural heritage site, some sections of the wild Great Wall have been damaged in recent years due to both natural disasters and human impact. These sections are in dire need of maintenance and reinforcement.

"It's the world's

greatest open-air museum without a curator," he said. Around the year 2000, Lindesay and his wife began to organise volunteers to participate in the protection of the Great Wall, especially its wild sections. They set up an environmental protection station at the foot of the Jiankou section, and co-operated with the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Cultural Heritage and other institutions to carry out a long-term protection project.

In recognition of his contributions, Lindesay in 1999 received the Friendship Award, the highest award given by the People's Republic of China to foreign experts who make a significant contribution to the country's progress. His home country also recognised his contributions in 2006, when Queen Elizabeth II presented him with an Order of the British Empire [OBE].

Lindesay has written more than 10 books about China with a focus on the Great Wall, and has also made a number of documentaries about the Great Wall together with his two sons, both of whom are graduates of Peking University.

Prior to their five-month-long journey, the Lindesay brothers had already accrued "at least 1,000 days of experience on various parts of the Great Wall". As children, they spent the majority of their weekends on it or

right beside it.

In 2016, the brothers spent the whole summer flying drones at scores of locations along the Great Wall. The project led to them producing the first internationally broadcast documentary to show the Great Wall from the air.

"Looking back, I had a 'wall-spent' youth, walking, talking, photographing and picking up garbage from the Great Wall – 30 weekends a year," James said.

"We attended pretty much every volunteer event

Who are we if we cannot cherish the Great Wall

my father [organised], as long as we could hike up or be carried up," Thomas said. "But we enjoyed it from a young age. Maybe in the early years, we didn't quite understand what we were doing. We were just told what to do. But later on, we realised that what we were doing had some significance."

In 2019, the Beijing Government initiated a plan to protect and develop the Great Wall Cultural Belt, an area of 4,929.29 square km, which includes both

heritage protection and ecological conservation. In 2021, China began the development of the Great Wall National Park, currently an area of 60 square km approximately 70 km north-east of Beijing.

"Who are we if we cannot cherish the Great Wall" is Lindesay's catchphrase. For him, it is not enough to just go to the Great Wall; one must also love and protect it. But he believes there is still a long way to go in protecting the wall and its heritage.

"I have two countries, as I've spent exactly half my life in Britain and half my life in China. If we have this more open world, we can get on much better together and really believe in the strength of culture as a bridge to bring people together," he said. And so his watch continues...

Beijing Review

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• William Lindesay (centre) with his sons



• Where the Wall meets the sea. The Lindesay brothers at the Old Dragon's Head in 2022

Lumumba – The murder of an African hero

by Marcus Browning

Patrice Lumumba was amongst the most courageous and principled figures in a generation of young nationalist leaders who came forward in the second half of the 20th Century to claim freedom from European colonialism. The leader of the Congolese independence struggle and one of the most impassioned critics of the colonial oppression of Africa. He was brutally killed on 17th January 1961.

His assassination took place less than seven months after the Congo had declared its independence, with Lumumba as its first Prime Minister.

Determined to deny supporters of Congolese liberation even a corpse around which they could rally, the order was given to obliterate every physical trace of Lumumba. So the Belgian soldiers set about the grisly task of destroying the remains using axes, saws, acid and fire.

Belgian colonialism had deliberately kept the African population of the Congo untrained and uneducated, reduced to the status of beasts of burden for the extractive industries that looted the country's vast mineral and other natural wealth.

On the eve of independence, the Congo, a territory larger than Western Europe, had no African army officers, only three African managers in the entire civil service, and only 30 university graduates.

Yet Western investments in Congo's mineral resources (uranium, copper, gold, tin, cobalt, diamonds, manganese and zinc) were colossal. These investments meant that the West was determined to keep control over the country beyond independence.

The Belgians attempted to organise the transfer of power in a way that would ensure that 'independence' would at best be a formal fiction. They fostered tribal and ethnic differences to

splinter the independence movement.

Of 120 different parties, most of them regionally or ethnically based, only one, the Mouvement National Congolais (the MNC), led by Lumumba, favoured a centralised government and a Congo united across ethnic and regional lines.

Following widespread rioting and strikes in 1959, the colonial power plucked Lumumba from a Belgian colonial jail where he had been beaten and tortured for advocating independence. He was flown to Brussels to participate in round-table discussions on Congolese independence.

The Belgians hoped the talks would smooth the way for a painless transition to a regime that would leave Belgium's financial interests in the Congo intact, whilst transferring the trappings of state power from the white colonialists to a new, pliable native elite.

In the midst of a ceremony in which the Belgians had congratulated themselves on successfully civilising the Congolese and preparing them for self-rule, Lumumba spelled out in graphic terms the reality of colonial oppression. Describing Belgian rule as 80 years of "humiliating slavery which was imposed upon us by force", Lumumba continued: "We have known harassing work, exacted in exchange for salaries which did not permit us to eat enough to drive away hunger, to clothe ourselves, or to house ourselves decently, or to raise our children as creatures dear to us ...

"We have known ironies, insults, blows that we endured morning, noon and night, because we are negroes ... We have seen our lands seized in the name of allegedly legal laws, which in fact recognised only that might is right ...

"We will never forget the massacres where so many perished, the cells into which those who refused to submit to a regime of oppression and exploitation were thrown."

Lumumba's forthright demands for economic independence, social



• Patrice Lumumba

justice and political self-determination, and his hostility to a political set-up based upon tribal divisions, which the colonialists had effectively used to divide and rule Africa, sealed his fate.

Shortly after independence, Katanga province, the main mining region, declared itself a separate state under Moises Tshombe, who acted under the protection of Western mining interests and the Belgian military. Belgium sent its army back into the former colony, with the alleged aim of protecting its nationals.

Lumumba's threat to appeal for Soviet aid as a last resort in his effort to free the country of the continuing domination of the Belgian mining interests and Belgian troops, gave Washington the pretext for allying with the old colonial power in seeking his elimination.

Lumumba invited in UN peacekeeping forces, but they too subordinated themselves to the machinations of Belgium and the USA, refusing to take any action to prevent the murder of the new Prime Minister.

In 2001 an all-party Belgian Parliamentary commission of inquiry acknowledged that Belgium had covertly channelled funds and arms to Katanga. It concluded that authorities in Brussels,

and Belgium's King Baudouin in particular, knew of the plans to kill Lumumba but did nothing to save him.

The report put much of the blame on Baudouin, who had conveniently died in 1993. It alleged that the King pursued his own post-colonial policy without the knowledge of the Belgian government.

Unfortunately for this facile explanation, other investigations have clearly revealed that the assassination of Lumumba was the direct result of orders given by the Belgian government and the Eisenhower administration in the USA, acting through the CIA and local clients financed and 'advised' by Brussels and Washington.

A book by Flemish historian Ludo de Witte, *De Moord Op Lumumba* (The Murder of Lumumba), cites a telegram sent three months before Lumumba's death from Count Harold d'Aspremont Lynden, then Belgium's Minister for African Affairs, to Belgian officials in the Congo: "The main aim to pursue in the interests of the Congo, Katanga and Belgium is clearly Lumumba's definitive elimination," said the memorandum.

Given that the Congolese leader had already been deposed from power and placed under house arrest at the time, there was no mistaking the

meaning of these words.

Also in 2001, the US government released archival material related to the Kennedy assassination that included an interview with the White House minute-taker under the Eisenhower administration, Robert Johnson.

In a meeting held with security advisers in August 1960, only two months after Congo achieved its formal independence from Belgium, Eisenhower ordered the CIA to "eliminate" Lumumba, according to Johnson's account. "There was a stunned silence for about 15 seconds and the meeting continued," Johnson recalled.

The CIA's director, Allen Dulles, referred to the Congolese leader as a "mad dog". Amongst the US agents on the ground in the Congo was a young CIA man working under diplomatic cover, Frank Carlucci, who tried to work his way into Lumumba's confidence in the months before the murder.

Carlucci went on to become National Security Advisor and Defense Secretary in the Reagan administration and the chairman of the Carlyle Group, the influential merchant bank that included George Bush Sr amongst its directors.

According to Larry Devlin, then the CIA station chief in Leopoldville (now

Kinshasa), the agency's chief technical officer arrived in the African nation shortly after the "elimination" order from Eisenhower. With him he brought a tube of poisoned toothpaste that was to be placed in the Congolese leader's bathroom.

The improbable plot was dropped, however, in favour of a more direct method. Lumumba was delivered into the hands of his bitterest political enemy, Moises Tshombe, the secessionist leader of Katanga.

Although Tshombe became Prime Minister after Lumumba's murder, his reign did not last long. In 1965, Joseph Mobutu, the Congolese army leader who handed Lumumba over to his executioners, staged a bloodless coup, inaugurating a 32-year dictatorship that was legendary for its corruption and greed.

Under Mobutu, the Congo – renamed Zaire – became Washington's closest ally on the continent and served as a staging area for the USA's counter-revolutionary interventions against liberation movements in southern Africa.

**Guardian
Australian communist
weekly**

No sense of shame

The US House Ethics Committee has launched an investigation against Congressman George Santos, who has been found to have fabricated major elements of his life story and even lied about his mother's death in the 9/11 attacks.

Not known for aggressively pursuing inquiries, the committee has limited ability to punish lawmakers for wrongdoing. In February, Santos told CNN that he is "not concerned" about a House ethics probe. Despite his scandals, Republicans seem reluctant to push for Santos' immediate removal from office.

National Public Radio (NPR) recently lamented that surviving scandals has become easier for politicians such as Santos,

as the USA has entered an era of "post-shame politics". But NPR is a bit slow on the uptake. For people outside the USA, the post-shame era began long ago, particularly as regards US foreign policy.

In his book *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order*, Samuel P Huntington noted that the belief in American principles as universal and the US mission to promote and defend these principles throughout the world has been a persistent and potent theme in US foreign policy. This theme has become intermittent and weaker however, as the USA pursues its interests with no sense of shame and a willingness to flout its own principles and values.

The "America First" policy embodies how times have changed. Championed by former US President Donald Trump, the approach prioritises US

interests over those of other countries. It disregards established international norms, which many have criticised as selfish and isolationist.

Sadly, the lack of shame in American foreign policy has persisted beyond Trump's presidency, as seen in continued US drone strikes, the hasty Afghanistan withdrawal, the theft of Syrian oil and its long-arm jurisdiction, to name just a few.

American drone strikes in Somalia, Yemen and other countries have been controversial due to their often deadly impact on innocent civilians. Despite the US government's claims to uphold human rights and the rule of law, the drone strikes have resulted in hundreds, if not thousands, of non-combatant deaths. Moreover, the legality of these strikes has been widely questioned, particularly as they

were often carried out in countries where the USA was not officially at war and without the consent of those nations.

Since 2001, the US military has conducted several operations in the name of fighting terrorism resulting in the deaths of over 900,000 individuals, approximately 335,000 of them civilians. These horrific US military campaigns have created 37 million refugees worldwide, with an estimated 48,000 civilians having died due to American airstrikes over the past two decades.

A lack of shame was also evident during the abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan, ignoring the spirit of international co-operation and solidarity it had championed. Relying heavily on NATO partners during the 20-year war in Afghanistan, the US government suddenly pulled out of the country without

sufficient consultation with its allies, leaving them in a complex and precarious position, its allies complained.

The US military's exploitation of Syrian oil resources is another prime example of how America lacks shame. Despite violating international law, the USA and its mercenaries have been accused of extracting an average of 66,000 barrels of oil per day from Syrian oil fields. Such acts of theft have damaged the USA's moral authority and undermined its credibility as a global superpower.

Its long-arm jurisdiction also exemplifies a sense of shamelessness. The USA typically enforces its laws on foreign individuals and entities outside its territory, disregarding the sovereignty of other nations. This behaviour

has been illustrated in cases involving the French company Alstom and the Chinese company Huawei. In both cases, the USA used its legal and economic prowess to bully others into submission and maintain dominance in key industries whilst containing rising competitors.

The implications of a "post-shame era" in US foreign policy extend far beyond the country's borders. People worldwide associate such shame with the entire nation.

To rebuild its reputation, the USA must prioritise collaboration with other countries rather than continue to pursue unilateralism and hegemony. Only then can it play a more constructive and positive role in shaping a safer and more prosperous world.

Xinhua

Israelis protest against new reactionary laws

Ongoing protests against the far-right Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were larger than ever over the weekend as an estimated 200,000 people or more took to the streets in Tel Aviv and other cities to denounce judicial reforms they warn put the nation on a path towards dictatorship. The Israeli daily newspaper *Haaretz* (The Land) reported Saturday's turnout as a record since the movement started in early January.

For over two months, weekly protests – mostly on the weekends but increasingly during the week as well – have taken place in response to Netanyahu and his coalition government pushing a judicial takeover that critics say would

curtail democracy.

"There's a great danger that Israel will turn into a dictatorship," Ophir Kubitsky, a 68-year-old high school teacher at the demonstration, told the media. "We came here to demonstrate over and over again until we win."

The demonstrations in Tel Aviv and other locations "began peacefully", reports Reuters. "However, footage released by police later showed protesters breaking down barriers in Tel Aviv and igniting fires as they blocked roads. Police sprayed water cannons at the protesters."

Whilst Israeli liberals increasingly register fear and discomfort over the direction of its government's growing autocratic tendencies, Palestinian rights advocates have noted that the right-wing slide is a direct and predictable continuation of a system that denies its Palestinian citizens full rights under the law

whilst overseeing a brutal and repressive apartheid regime.

Netanyahu's government seeks to ram through in hopes of 'saving the essence'

democracy, equality, or human rights.

"A key question for



• Communists join the protests in Tel Aviv

As American-Palestinian scholar Yousef Munayyer recently wrote in a column about the protest movement for *+972 Magazine*: "As tens of thousands of Israelis protest the reforms that

of Israeli democracy, they are largely avoiding a confrontation with the foundational problem, namely that the essence of the Israeli system is to put settler colonialism ahead of any liberal principles around

many concerned not only about Israel's increasingly autocratic and right-wing lurch, but its ever-worsening treatment of the Palestinians living under hostile military occupation is this: Does

this loose group oppose the settler-colonial system that these legal reforms would further enable, or does it simply seek a return to the settler-colonial system, but without Netanyahu at its head?"

Munayyer believes all evidence thus far indicates the latter is the unfortunate answer, which is why Palestinians are noticeably absent from celebrating the display of dissent and opposition in Tel Aviv and elsewhere.

"For all Palestinians, including those with Israeli citizenship, there is little urgency to try to 'save' Israeli democracy, primarily because for them it has never existed," Munayyer concluded. "Not only is a political system that is constructed to be democratic toward some, but not all, not a democracy, it is also not going to seem worth saving to those it disadvantages."

Radio Havana Cuba