

Russian rockets send Ukraine reeling!

by our Eastern European
Affairs correspondent

Devastating waves of missiles pound strategic targets throughout Ukraine whilst Russian troops launch a probing advance to break the Ukrainian line near Donetsk city. The Russians say their missiles have smashed the headquarters of the Ukrainian secret service and sunk the last remaining Ukrainian warship during a raid on the port of Odessa whilst the feeble Ukrainian response was an ineffectual drone attack on Moscow launched largely for propaganda purposes.

The Kremlin has confirmed reports that the Main Intelligence Directorate of the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence was hit in an overnight Russian missile strike on Kiev. The strike followed the drone attack on Moscow and a series of threats by a senior Ukrainian intelligence officer to "kill Russians" around the world.

"All I will comment on is that we've been killing Russians and we will keep killing Russians anywhere on the face of this world until the complete victory of Ukraine," Ukrainian intelligence chief Kyrylo Budanov said in an interview with the US media last month, after being asked to comment on whether Kiev was involved in last year's murder of Russian journalist Daria Dugina. Several weeks later, Budanov told the German media that Vladimir Putin was also on his hit-list.

Russia's response has been to add "decision-making" centres to

their list of strategic targets for their drones and missiles. And last week Russian President Vladimir Putin confirmed that Russia had destroyed the headquarters of the Ukrainian intelligence service in Kiev.

"Since the start of the special military operation, the Russian Armed Forces are striking Ukraine, but using high-precision weapons. They are targeting military infrastructure, arms depots and other targets that could be used for military action," Putin said, speaking to a reporter at an economic exhibition on Tuesday.

"We've already mentioned that we can strike decision-making centres and headquarters. Obviously, the Military Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine's headquarters is also such a target. And in response, as you are well aware, the Kiev regime chose a different path, a path to try to intimidate Russia and its citizens, to try to target residential buildings. It is an obvious indicator of terrorist activity," Putin said, referring to the drone attack on the Russian capital.

None of the eight Ukrainian drones hit military targets. Three were suppressed by electronic warfare measures and deviated from their intended course before crashing, and five were shot down by Moscow's air defence systems outside the city. Several residential buildings were damaged and two people suffered minor injuries.

Meanwhile, a Russian precision-strike on Odessa has sunk the last ship in the Ukrainian navy. The Ukrainian corvette *Yuri Olefirenko* went down during a strike on the naval dockyard. A fire broke out and detonated the ammunition, sending the ship down. Reports claim that there were significant losses amongst the crew.

Back on the front, fierce fighting has erupted around Avdeevka in the Donbas. Russian troops, backed by crack Chechen 'Akhmat' commandos, have already over-run some of the Ukrainian positions in a limited offensive aimed at breaking



• Chechen commandos on patrol

through the Ukrainian lines north of the city of Donetsk.

In the recently liberated town of Artyomovsk that the Ukrainians called Bakhmut, the Donbas authorities are looking at the massive task ahead of them in restoring life to the shattered city. Housing, hospitals, factories and offices – all were destroyed during the months of bitter street fighting that only ended when the last Ukrainian troops were driven out in May. They have to be restored along with the cultural facilities that are part and parcel of life in the Russian Federation.

The Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) is drawing up a cultural agenda and high on the list is a plan to build a new monument to honour the Wagner company, the Russian 'Foreign Legion' that drove the Ukrainian fascists out of town. "I believe we must announce a contest in the Republic for the best sketch of a monument to the Wagner fighters," says acting DPR Minister of Culture Mikhail Zheltyakov. "Wagner fighters are heroically brave people who 'picked out' the enemy from every meter of the ground in the town," he said.

FUND

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

A step in the right direction

Union activists broke through the bourgeois consensus on Ukraine last week when delegates passed a motion that has enraged the union bureaucracy as well as the fake left cheerleaders for imperialism within the University and College Union (UCU).

At the UCU's annual conference in Glasgow delegates passed a motion that explicitly said no to sending arms to Ukraine and no to NATO expansion and escalation.

The union's chief bureaucrat, General Secretary Jo Grady says that she was "deeply disappointed the motion passed", claiming it was being used to "attack the union and question our solidarity with the working class and people of Ukraine", whilst the movers claim this was a major victory for the anti-war movement.

Arthur Scargill and Bob Crow were the exceptions that proved that rule that senior union full-time officials rarely reflect the demands of the membership they claim to serve. So Ms Grady can bleat on for as long as she likes as far as we're concerned.

At the same time it must be said that this motion is a very modest step indeed in the battle against the war lobby within the labour movement. Like the Stop the War movement that has clearly inspired this initiative, the motion brands Putin a "war criminal" and calls on Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. But it says nothing about the fascist terror that followed that drove the people of the Donbas to take up the gun in 2014.

What it does tell us is that Putin has "unleashed war crimes" and says "we should stand in solidarity with ordinary Ukrainians and demand an immediate withdrawal of Russian troops". The motion would have been carried unanimously had it stopped there. But it didn't.

It goes on to state that: "NATO is not a progressive force: escalation risks widening war in the region only through a peaceful resolution can lives be saved." It calls on the Government to stop arming Ukraine and calls on the union to support protests called by Stop The War, CND and other anti-war organisations. This is what has enraged the war-lobby.

The cause of peace is not helped, however, by those in the anti-war movement who blame the Russians for the crisis, ignore the legitimate demands of the people of the Donbas and fail to recognise that this war began in 2014 when the legitimate Ukrainian government was overthrown by fascist gangs supported by Anglo-American and Franco-German imperialism.

The hidden hand is always at work amongst the fake left within the peace and anti-war movement who essentially argue that peace is only attainable on imperialist terms. We saw this time and time again over Serbia, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Palestine, and now we're seeing it over Ukraine.

The movers of the UCU motion have opened up the debate and taken a step in the right direction. But they still call for an unconditional Russian withdrawal from Ukraine – which is also the demand of US imperialism and its lackeys.

The communist stand must be for a just peace in Ukraine – for a neutral and de-Nazified Ukraine that recognises the decision of the Donbas and Crimean republics to join the Russian Federation and grants equal rights for all the people of the regions of the Ukraine.

Sunak slammed for parroting prejudice

by Deng Xiaoci and Du Qiongfang

China firmly opposed and strongly condemned the wrongful claims made by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak after the Group of Seven (G7) summit in which he called China the "biggest challenge of our age to global security and prosperity", saying that he was simply parroting other people's words that constituted malicious slanders in disregard of the facts.

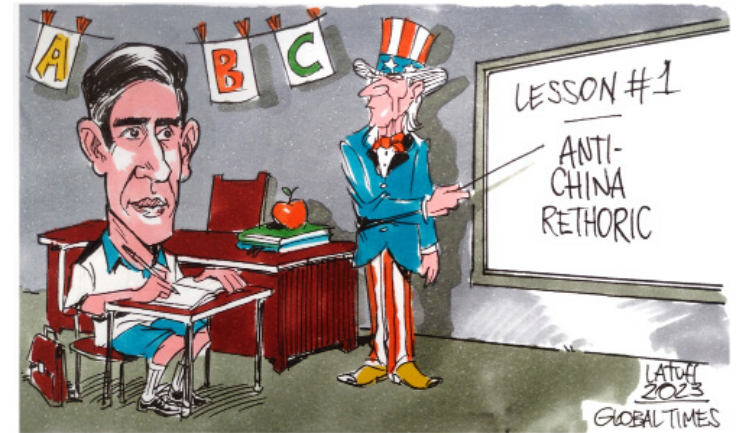
Rejecting Sunak's provocations, the Chinese Embassy in the UK said: "Anyone without prejudice can see that China is a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, and a defender of the international order, while the US and a handful of its vassal countries have kept interfering in the internal affairs of other countries and provoked confrontation. They are the ones that pose the biggest challenge to global security and prosperity."

"We urge British politicians to focus more on dealing with the long-standing political, economic and social problems in their own country, instead of always dancing to the tune of the US, stirring up trouble around the world, and creating division and confrontation. We call on the British side to stop slandering and smearing China so as to avoid further damage to China-UK relations."

Chinese analysts view Sunak's latest remarks on China as a symbolic move aimed at pleasing the USA, especially after Japan – one of the G7 nations – voiced rather strong willingness to make itself the USA's first mate in the Asia-Pacific region in Washington's anti-China campaign.

Sunak's increasingly hostile rhetoric against China can also be viewed as a key expression of London's bid to court the USA, according to Lü Xiang, a research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The UK, with its waning power on the world stage following Brexit, urgently needs to endear itself to the USA – its main but geographically distant ally – to avoid jeopardising the balance with its close European neighbours.

Cui Hongjian, director of the Department of European Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said that



after taking office, Sunak has made several adjustments in terms of defining his government's China attitude, developing it from a "systemic challenge to British values and interests" to the current "biggest challenge of our age to global security and prosperity", from which we can see a quantitative change based on prejudices but not yet a qualitative one, as the term "threat" is still not being used.

The G7 summit ended with obvious divisions amongst the group of nations, with the USA, UK and Japan taking an aggressive attitude on China whilst Europe showed balance and reluctance to follow suit, according to Cui.

By making the most aggressive remarks to provoke China, Sunak is simply trying to create publicity to offset the fact that the UK's international status and influence is obviously in decline, Cui noted.

It would not be a surprise, however, if shrewd British politicians do not turn the hawkish talk into action, analysts noted.

Earlier in May, Britain's Minister for Investment Dominic Johnson paid a rare visit to China's Hong Kong, during which he held a series of meetings with the special administrative region's government officials and executives. This was welcomed by observers as a sign of London's eagerness to engage deeper with China on economic co-operation after the fallout of Brexit.

In an opinion piece on the visit published in the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*, Johnson wrote that the "UK will continue to engage robustly and constructively" with China where their interests converge.

Ahead of the G7 summit,

Sunak and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida agreed on a landmark new global strategic partnership called the 'Hiroshima Accord' when they met. From doubling the number of British troops participating in a Japan-based military exercise to deploying a UK aircraft carrier to the Indo-Pacific again in 2025, as well as promoting co-operation on semiconductors, the accord seeks to cement the countries' deepening relationship. This shows the British government's opportunism said Lü.

Sunak also claimed that "China is the only country with both the means and intent to reshape the world order", in a move Chinese analysts viewed as being made "only to justify its anti-China policies".

When it comes to understanding China, countries such as the USA and the UK share a prejudice that any powerful country must seek hegemony and build a new world order to influence others like they did, Cui noted.

China has always played an active role in defending and improving the world order, which goes beyond the narrow definition of the USA or G7 countries, where only a few developed countries dominate global governance and connectivity resources, Lü pointed out.

As a developing country, China shares with the world, especially fellow developing countries, its successful experience on getting rid of poverty, shouldering its responsibility under the principle of "extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits", he said.

Global Times

Workers' Notes

Union Membership in Crisis

by New Worker correspondent

Late last month an important event in the trade union calendar took place. This was the publication of the annual *Trade Union Membership, UK 1995–2022: Statistical Bulletin* from the Department of Business & Trade (DBT). This event was tactfully ignored by the Trade Union Congress (TUC) so the *New Worker* can claim a modest scoop.

Sadly it is not difficult to see why the TUC ignored the publication. The figures will bring more joy to *Daily Telegraph* readers than to those of the *New Worker*. The main results of the survey are surprisingly a decline in trade union membership, despite the recent strike wave, which in theory ought to give a boost to trade union numbers. Normally strike action boosts union recruitment, but not in this case. One possible explanation is that the recent and present round of industrial action took place in already well-organised areas.

The headline figures are that the percentage of UK employees who belong to trade unions fell to 22.3 per cent in 2022, down from 23.1 per cent in 2021.

In numerical terms this means 200,000 less workers are in unions, with only 6,250,000 trade unionists out of a workforce of 28,300,000. Between 2021 and 2022 the workforce grew by 100,000, which makes things even worse.

Both the public and private sectors saw falls. Private sector members fell by 152,000 to 2.4 million in 2022, the lowest ever. In the public sector, numbers declined by 48,000 to 3.84 million.

Two thirds of the overall fall was accounted for by a decline of 129,000 private-sector female employee numbers. Across the UK the largest decline was in Wales, where the comparatively high density fell 4.2 per cent to 31.4. Only in Northern Ireland was there any decent increase, by 1.8 to 32.3 per cent.

These are Government figures, based on its *Labour Force*

however. The 1995 starting date (when density was 32.4 per cent) is simply due to a change in counting techniques introduced that year.

In fact trade union membership has been in decline since the highpoint of 1979, when 13.2 million were in unions. Numbers fell dramatically to 7.94 million until 1996 when things improved slightly, followed by

branches of management and union leaders are difficult to distinguish from directors. It is only in the Scandinavian countries do we find high memberships density, with Denmark's 66.5 and Norway's 49.2 per cent.

Some unions will doubtless assert the picture is not all bleak, or as bad as the DBT figures would have it, but the arguments about statistical details and ar-

union employees. At one level this simply marks the welcome expansion of higher education and more jobs requiring degrees (such as nursing). The more worrying aspect of that statistic, however, strongly suggests that trade unions are failing to attract the type of workers who found it necessary to found trade unions in the first place. The danger of trade unions becoming professional associations and not fighting, working-class organisations is a real one. It is possible that the rise of the small, non-TUC unions such as the IWW, UVW and the IWGB aimed at low-paid migrant workers suggests that there is a worrying gap in the market left by the bigger unions.

Another feature of present-day trade unionism is that they seem to be past the first flush of youth. Of employees who were trade union members in 2022 only 3.7 per cent were aged between 16 and 24, 20.9 per cent 25 to 34, 35.7 per cent between 35 and 49, with 39.7 per cent 50 or over.

Trade unionism now seems to be something people grow into rather than get initiated into on the first day at work. About a quarter of trade unionists had between 10–20 years of service, those in jobs for 20 years accounted for another 22.3 per cent, but newbies with less than one year and between 1–2 years of service tenure accounted for only 9.5 and 6.7 per cent respectively.

A related point is the low unionisation of low-paid workers. Whilst it is not surprising that only 17.7 per cent of those earning more than £1,000 per week are in unions, it is shocking that only 11 per cent earning less than £250 were. Union density is around the average of 22.1 per cent for those earning between £250–£499 and an above-average of 28.3 per cent for those on £500–£999. As part of the same pattern, bosses of various standing tend to be more likely trade unions members than the workers they supervise: 31.1 per cent of foremen are as compared with 21 per cent of those who are not managers or supervisors.

Trade unionists with a disability are slightly keener than the average worker on trade unionism, but even here the rate is only 27.6 per cent compared with the non-disabled rate of 21.3 per cent.

At present those in professional occupations account for 43.5 per cent of trade unionists compared with 27.9 per cent of UK employees overall. Non-professional occupations with high unionisation levels are in Caring, Leisure and Other Service occupations, and Process, Plant and Machine Operatives.



Survey, and cover membership of all registered trade unions, whether or not affiliated to the TUC. They often differ from those from the Trade Union and Employers Association Certification Officer (not updated since 2020), which are based on official returns from unions and bosses' organisations, but the trends are clear. All the figures quoted here cover the last quarter (October–December) of 2022. Membership figures supplied by trade unions themselves often needed to be taken with a pinch of salt, particularly in those unions which, if branch membership lists are to be believed, many members are well over 90 years old.

The cautious DBT statisticians state that "this represents the lowest union membership rate on record among UK employees for which we have comparable data (since 1995)". Things are worse than that,

a period of gentler decline until 2010, when the picture became more varied with further decline punctuated with occasional signs of growth. The period 2017–2020 saw modest growth that has now been reversed, first with a small fall in 2021 followed by the latest decline. We have to go back to 1938 to find an absolutely smaller number of trade union members. On present trends, trade unions could go the way of friendly societies if action is not taken to reverse the long-term decline.

It is worth noting that in an international context the figures are not too bad. In the USA it is only around 10 per cent. Across the Channel in France the union density is less than 10 per cent, but what the workers save on union dues they spend on petrol bombs and barricade-building tools. Across the Rhine, Germany has a density of 16.5 per cent, but most unions are simply

going over who is to blame need to take a distant second place to urgent recruitment drives, preferably after unions have had a good hard look at themselves and ask what has gone so wrong. Many of Britain's unions are big enough to undertake pilot projects in different regions before adapting the successful models across the board, assuming of course the will was there.

Breaking Down the Numbers

At first glance trade unionists seem to be brainier than non-unionists. The figures show that almost two-thirds 63 per cent of union members have a degree or other higher education qualification compared with slightly under half of non-

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Public versus Private

The de-industrialisation that marked the 1980s naturally hit male manufacturing jobs the most, and its legacy is still with us. In the long-term, since 1995 private-sector union membership has declined the most: trade union membership in the private sector fell by 981,000 or 8.9 per cent since 1995; in the same period public sector membership increased by 121,000 or 3.3 per cent, but that positive figure does not make much of a dent in slowly declining density even in the strongest sectors.

The 2022 figures show that private sector density was 12 per cent last year, it was much stronger at 48.6 per cent in the public sector. This means than now only a minority of public sector workers are organised, however, a fall of 12.7 per cent in the density since 1995. The 48.6 per cent sounds good but it occurs in a very soft environment where union organisers do not become crocodile food.

Boys and Girls

In 2022 only 25.6 per cent of female employees were in unions, again a depressing record low. This fall of 115,000 to 3.55 million in 2022 accounts of 58 per cent of this year's decline. Male membership was only 19.1, a

fall of 0.8 per cent, another low record of 2.7 million.

In stark contrast, in 1995 no less than 35 per cent of male workers were unionised with just below 30 per cent of female workers. Declines in male membership saw the ratio equalise at around 29 per cent in 2002, after that the male density has dramatically fallen to its present level. Sadly, it has taken a decline in female membership to narrow the gap. The changing balance of the sexes is due to an increase in females as a proportion of the workforces, with the decline in manufacturing where the workforce was three-quarters male. There was a large increase in the number of employees in Education and Human Health and Social Care, where female employees account for more than 70 per cent of the workforce. These are highly unionised as bosses tend not to shoot union organisers. That has been responsible for Unison overtaking Unite as the largest union in Britain.

Across the Country

Taking a geographical look at the figures does not reveal many surprises, apart from noting that UK trade unionism is strongest across the Irish Sea in northern Ireland with a comparatively mighty 32.3 per cent, it was the only major growth area last year. After which comes Wales on 31.4, which also had the most severe decline. Coming third is the North East of England on 26.4. Scotland comes fourth. The north of England is generally fairly strong but the English average is a low 21 per cent,

with the Midlands and South all below the abysmal average. Inner London has the dubious honour of propping up the rest of the table with only 16.5 per cent. What happened to the legacy of the Dockers and their tanner? Only in the South East and South West was there some modest growth to offset against a picture of wider decline across the British mainland.

Longer term decline since 1995 was steepest in Wales and Scotland, at 12.9 and 12.6 per

managed to recruit more. Inner London is still the lowest, with a trade union presence in the workplace of 42.5 per cent.

With a few exceptions, the same geographical trends apply to the proportion of employees in jobs where pay depends on collective bargaining (agreements affecting more than one employee). Top of the tree is the old Strathclyde region in the West of Scotland with 55.1 per cent. Wales came second on 52.1 and as always Inner Lon-



cent respectively, reflecting the final decline of heavy industry in these areas.

Looking more closely we can see a slightly more positive picture when we turn attention to the percentage of employees with a trade union presence in the workplace. Greater Manchester tops the bill with a trade union presence of 61.7 per cent, beating Wales on 60.3. These areas are likely to offer the most scope for recruitment. It is legitimate to wonder however, why unions with an existing workplace presence have not

don comes last on 31.9 per cent.

Some Passing Observations

Turning to the reported ethnic make-up of trade unions, we find that native born British workers were most likely to be in a union, with 24 per cent unionised compared with 14.8 of foreign-born employees. 'White British' were most heavily unionised at the rate of 23.3 per cent, closely followed by the 'Black or Black British' ethnic group on 22.8. Density is lower amongst the 'Chinese or other ethnic group' employees at only 13.5 per cent, whilst 'mixed ethnicity', 'Asian and Asian British' employees were both just over 14 per cent, well below the workforce as a whole. They have high levels of employment in small catering establishments that have never been bastions of trade unions.

Amongst the ethnic minorities, female workers are more strongly organised than male by a margin of about 10 per cent. About half Britain's Black or Black British employees work in the largely public sector areas of Health, Social Work, Education, Public Administration or Defence industries, which have high unionisation rates.

The latest figures show that being a trade unionist makes sense in the pocket as their wages are 3.5 per cent higher than non-unionists, but this figure has fallen considerably from last year's bonus of 4.7 per cent.

Some Lessons

It is not alarmist to shout "Something Needs to be Done" before it is too late. First and foremost it is the responsibility of trade unions to recognise that they have failed to make themselves attractive to potential members, regardless of race, sex, age or any other factor. This brutal truth is clear from the low densities in the public sector where trade unions often have offices in the workplace. Although the public sector is comparatively strong there is plenty of room for improvement. Questions such as securing recognition at brutal employers such as Amazon are a very different matter.

Margaret Thatcher left office in 1990 so she can no longer be used as an excuse for low membership numbers in 2023. The new industries that have appeared since her departure need to be organised rather than spending time mourning those she destroyed.

To some extent the working class needs to pull its socks up. Too many workers think of trade unions as an ambulance service to be called upon in emergencies, but that is not how they work, they are only as strong as their numbers allow them to be.

All too often it takes a crisis such as Covid or the threat of takeover or redundancy to boost union membership. Union representation benefits all employees in a workplace, even if they are not members, but to a limited extent. Although the mere existence of unions provides something of a shield for non-members, the lack of numbers prevents workers going on the offensive to pursue a pay claim.

Trade Union officialdom may not be entirely unhappy about a period of managed decline, so long as things do not go too far. Even then, a merger will save their bacon. More members equals more work for the well-paid bureaucrats who prefer doing unsatisfactory deals in the boardroom rather than spending hours handing out recruitment leaflets at a factory gate.

The increase in part-time work, occasionally by choice or more likely by necessity, is not good for unionisation. With support for students at an historical low, there is no shortage of people wanting a few hours of work as couriers or in the hospitality industry. Such jobs are seen as tedious necessity so they therefore have little interest in anything other than boosting their own irregular earnings and will be more interested in graduating than in becoming a working-class hero.

Perhaps some readers could write in with their own ideas or lessons, positive and negative, of union organising and recruiting. They are certainly needed.

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

New Worker 6th June 2003

THE LIES and deceptions used by Tony Blair and George Bush to persuade their governments to back the illegal attack and invasion of Iraq are coming back to haunt them with a vengeance.

Tony Blair in particular is facing mounting accusations that he exaggerated and misled the House of Commons on the issue of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) to get backing for this extremely unpopular war.

One thing that Blair is very good at is persuading

other MPs and politicians to put aside their instinctive doubts and believe in his overriding reasons for doing this his way – the American way. He needed to convince the waverers that Britain and the USA were in imminent danger from chemical and biological weapons that Iraq had stashed away and that could be used within 45 minutes.

Both Bush and Blair repeatedly asserted they had sound evidence from their intelligence sources that these weapons existed, even though they refused to allow the United Nations weapons inspectors to continue to search for them.

During the invasion of Iraq, the Iraqis used no WMDs nor were any found stockpiled in Iraq.

Since then the US army colonel in charge of finding these weapons has inspected key sites in Baghdad and reported that no trace of bunkers or bodies has been found.

Colonel Tim Madere said: "When we came out here, the

primary thing we were looking for was an underground facility, or bodies, forensics, and basically what we saw was giant holes created."

Last week former Cabinet Minister Clare Short accused Blair of lying to the Commons, of distorting British intelligence reports on the WMDs, and of having made a pact with Bush that the attack on Iraq would go ahead, come what may.

Robin Cook, who resigned his position as Leader of the House, said that Blair had "lied to the nation" and that "the whole war was built upon falsehood". Blair has reacted angrily, accusing his accusers of having political motives and MI6 of "skulduggery".

Tory leader Iain Duncan Smith claimed that "Nobody believes a word now that the Prime Minister is saying" and added that "the whole credibility of his government rests on clearing up these charges".

The New Cold War that Threatens the World

by Vijay Prashad

IN July 2020, a group of us joined together to create the No Cold War platform (nocoldwar.org). We drafted a statement with a strong title: *A New Cold War against China is against the interests of humanity*.

The statement reads: “We note the increasingly aggressive statements and actions being taken by the US government in regard to China. These constitute a threat to world peace and are an obstacle to humanity successfully dealing with extremely serious common issues which confront it such as climate change, control of pandemics, racist discrimination and economic development.

“We therefore believe that any New Cold War would run entirely counter to the interests of humanity. Instead, we stand in favour of maximum global co-operation in order to tackle the enormous challenges we face as a species.

“We therefore call upon the US to step back from this threat of a Cold War and also from other dangerous threats to world peace it is engaged in including: withdrawal from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces agreement; withdrawal from the Paris Climate Change Accords; and its increasing disengagement from UN bodies. The US should also stop pressuring other countries to adopt such dangerous positions.

“We support China and the US basing their relations on mutual dialogue and centring on the common issues which unite humanity.”

Thousands of people signed the statement, including Celso Amorim (advisor to President Lula of Brazil), Sevim Dagdelen (chair of the Die Linke (The Left) parliamentary group in the German Foreign Affairs Committee), Irvin Jim (general secretary of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa), N Ram (former editor-in-chief of *The Hindu*) and Zhang Weiwei (who had been the translator of Deng Xiaoping).

During the COVID19 pandemic, No Cold War held a series of webinars to campaign against the US hybrid war on China and the threats that the provocations by the US government might lead to a military confrontation against China. The USA had already begun to deepen its anti-China military alliances through the Quad (with Australia, India and Japan) and through the AUKUS



• Anti-war protest against the Group of Seven (G7) summit in Hiroshima last month

(with Australia and the UK) as well as to ramp up its military forces in its bases (from Japan to Australia) and through the presence of its naval fleet. Over the course of the last two years, these alliances and threats have increased, with the USA provoking conflicts over Taiwan and the Korean peninsula.

The most recent provocation has come during the G7 meeting that was held in Hiroshima, Japan in the third week of May. Here, despite differences between the G7 countries, these Western powers and Japan made open threats against China, including accusations of “economic coercion” that have been denied by Beijing.

In January 2023, the USA announced that it would be opening new bases in northern Philippines, which would allow it to move troops rapidly to Taiwan in case of any Chinese movement to unify their country. At the same time, the USA promised Japan that the USA would help it expand its own military capacity, with the express interest of getting Japan to intervene in Taiwan from the north.

These two moves – the new bases in the Philippines and the aggressive statements from the USA and Japan – raise the temperature around Taiwan, which stated US policy understands is part of China. Responding to these moves, Mao Ning of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs said: “The US side, out of selfish interests, holds

on to the zero-sum mentality and keeps strengthening military deployment in the Asia-Pacific. This would escalate tensions and endanger peace and stability in the region. Regional countries need to remain vigilant and avoid being coerced or used by the USA.”

Mao Ning’s comments were directed as much to Washington as to Manila, Seoul and Tokyo. But no-one listened. South Korea’s President Yoon Suk-Yeol called for both the development of nuclear missiles by his country and the placement of US missiles on the Korean peninsula. President Ferdinand Marcos Jr of the Philippines initially backed the US plans to build bases in his country’s northern islands and then backed off by saying that these bases cannot be used in an attack on China (but did not specify if he meant that they cannot be used if the USA moves on Taiwan). Japan’s prime minister Fumio Kishida has urged the expansion of his country’s military to plan for a “Taiwan-related” war. These are all dangerous moves, which place the eastern flank of Asia on a hair-trigger.

At the close of the G7 meeting, the No Cold War platform released a statement on the summit and its implications (*At G7 Summit, Hiroshima Once Again Used for Cold War Agenda*). The statement noted: “The 49th Group of Seven (G7) summit took place this past weekend in Hiroshima, Japan,

from 19–21 May. Leaders from Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States gathered to discuss and co-ordinate their global strategies, with China and Russia at the top of the agenda.

“The summit took place at the very site where, on 6 August 1945, the US dropped a nuclear bomb, killing approximately 70,000 people instantly (the death toll rose to roughly 140,000 by the end of the year). That horrific act of violence – intended to send a warning to the Soviet Union – ushered in the Cold War; it is a disturbing historical parallel that, 78 years later, the US and its allies returned to Hiroshima to ramp up a New Cold War against China and Russia.

“At the summit, the G7 leaders prepared a ‘unified response’ against what they term China’s ‘economic coercion’, unveiling a new ‘Co-ordination Platform’ to this end. This initiative is the latest step in a years-long diplomatic campaign by the Biden administration to pressure its allies to support its tech war against China, in which the US has enacted numerous trade and investment restrictions seeking to ‘kneecap’ China’s advanced technological industries. This year, both US Senator Bob Menendez, Democratic Party chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and former UK Prime Minister Liz Truss have called for the formation of an ‘economic NATO’ and co-ordinated sanctions against

China.

“For the United States to talk of ‘economic coercion’ when it has, by far, the most extensive track record of imposing unilateral economic sanctions and coercive measures against other countries – including the six decades-long blockade against Cuba – is a most astonishing display of hypocrisy.

“Meanwhile, the G7 leaders declared that they would tighten sanctions against Russia and continue to ‘support Ukraine for as long as it takes’. With Ukraine’s President Vladimir Zelensky in attendance, US President Joe Biden pledged an additional \$375 million in additional military aid to the country – on top of the \$37 billion that the US has already provided since the start of the war – and also gave permission to G7 members to send their stocks of US-made F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine.

“It is disappointing that the G7 leaders did not use this opportunity to put forward any serious proposals to resolve the war in Ukraine and establish a lasting peace, but rather doubled down on their commitment to prolong the conflict. While the G7 attempted to court the Global South by inviting leaders from countries such as Brazil, India, and Indonesia, the perspective of developing countries on the conflict was not taken seriously at the summit. In fact, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, an outspoken advocate for dialogue and a peaceful resolution of the war, was snubbed by Zelensky despite making repeated efforts to meet.

“Instead, the United States and its allies appear intent on provoking another major power conflict – with China. As part of its broader efforts to militarise the Asia-Pacific, in the lead-up to the G7 summit, it was widely reported that NATO is planning to open a ‘liaison office’ in Japan, the first of its kind in the region.

“The G7 leaders should use their experience in Hiroshima to reflect on the immense human cost of the first Cold War and abandon their efforts to revive such conflicts today. The world needs solutions to address the urgent crises of climate change, poverty, hunger, and development, not divisive political agendas that push humanity down the path of war and destruction.”

People’s Democracy (India)

Why is Bakhmut Called Artemovsk and What's Its True Story?

by Ekaterina Blinova

For months, the Artemovsk (Bakhmut) 'meat grinder' has been the centre of the world's attention. On 20th May 2023, at noon, the city was fully liberated by Russian forces. What is so special about Bakhmut and what is it famous for?

Although the Kiev regime admitted the loss of Artemovsk, the Western press is not eager to acknowledge the profound defeat of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The *New York Times* says the capture of Artemovsk is only a "symbolic victory". The American paper says that "controlling it would not necessarily help Moscow" towards its larger stated goals, referring to Russia's plans of liberating the Donbas region.

So for starters, let's find out what Artemovsk is, why it is called Bakhmut, and what its story is.

Some history

The city is located on the Bakhmut-Turetskaya Upland of the Donetsk ridge on the Bakhmutka river, 89 kilometres north-east of Donetsk.

Believe it or not, Bakhmut is an ancient Russian city. The first official mention of Bakhmut goes back to 1571, when the czar, Ivan the Terrible, ordered the creation of border fortifications along the Aidar and Seversky Donets rivers, to protect the southern border of the Russian state from Crimean-Nogai slave raids.

One of these storozha (scouting) strongholds was named after the nearby Bakhmutka river, a tributary of the Seversky Donets, and located at the mouth of a stream called the Chorny Zherebets.

Vast salt deposits were later discovered there. Czar Peter the Great stepped up the development of the salt deposits in the



• Russian patrol in the ruins of Bakhmut

region. In 1703, by his order, a new fortress was built on the Bakhmutka river. Two years later, however, a detachment of Don Cossacks led by Kondraty Bulavin captured the Bakhmut salt works and destroyed the fortress amidst the so-called Bulavin uprising of 1707–1708. Having curbed the turmoil, Peter the Great ordered the construction of new fortifications. In 1710, an earthen fortress was laid on the left bank of the Bakhmutka river; it later was expanded and strengthened.

In the middle of the

18th Century, Bakhmut became the administrative centre of 'Slavic Serbia' – an Imperial Russian territory of military agricultural settlements of Serbs, Moldavians and Bulgarians on the southern bank of the river Seversky Donets (1753–1764). Later, in 1783, Bakhmut became a district town of the Yekaterinoslav Governorate of the Russian Empire.

In 1876, large new reserves of rock salt were discovered in the Bakhmut region. Eventually, the number of mines substantially increased and

in 1874 a salt plant was launched there, producing approximately 32.7 million kilograms of salt per year. By the beginning of the 20th Century, there were more than 70 small industrial enterprises in the city, as well as four salt mines that were part of the Bakhmut salt syndicate. Metalworking has also developed.

Following the Great October Revolution of 1917, the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic was founded. The idea of the Donbas communists was to maintain the region's autonomy within the

Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) but one of the revolutionary leaders, Vladimir Lenin, decided to incorporate the historically Russian Donbas region into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

In a 4th March 1918 letter to the Extraordinary Commissioner of Ukraine, Sergo Ordzhonikidze, Lenin criticised the desire of the inhabitants of Donbas to join the Russian SFSR. In the end, the Communist Party decided to make Donbas a part of Ukraine. Historians believe Lenin wanted to 'dilute'

the peasant population of the Ukrainian SSR with 'Donbas proletarians' who supported the Bolsheviks. Due to this politico-social engineering, Bakhmut became a Ukrainian city.

In 1920, the city became the administrative centre of the Donetsk province of the Ukrainian SSR. A few years later, in September 1924, Bakhmut was renamed Artemovsk in honour of Communist Party statesman and founder of the Donetsk-Krivoy Rog Soviet Republic Fyodor Sergeev, known under the pseudonym 'Comrade Artem'. The Bakhmut

district also received the name 'Artemovsk'.

Following the collapse of the USSR in 1991, Artemovsk became part of the Donetsk region of a newly established state, Ukraine. After the US-backed February 2014 coup d'état in Kiev, the Donbas region didn't accept the junta's illegitimate ouster of then-Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich, the banning of the Russian language, glorification of Nazi collaborators Stepan Bandera and Roman Shchukhevykh, and other Russophobic policies.

During the course of the Donbas resistance, some parts of the region managed to break away from Kiev. Others fell under the control of the Kiev regime during Ukraine's so-called "anti-terror operation" against dissenting civilians in Eastern Ukraine. So did Artemovsk.

In 2015, Artemovsk was renamed as Bakhmut as part of the Kiev regime's "de-communisation" policies and the overall bid to distance it from Russia and shared Russo-Ukrainian history. Ironically, the city has now regained its old Russian name.

The battle for Bakhmut
Over the course of the Russian special military operation, Artemovsk (Bakhmut) turned into nothing short of a 'meat-grinder'. Despite the Western press's current downplaying of the significance of Artemovsk's liberation, the Ukrainian leadership made every effort to maintain control over the city. Remarkably, whilst saying that Russia's victory is merely "symbolic", the Western media nonetheless report that Kiev is scrambling to "encircle it" and take it back. But what's the fuss if the city is so 'unimportant'?

In January 2023, Mark Sleboda, a US military veteran and international affairs and security analyst, explained that, firstly, "being kind of right in the centre of the Donetsk region, Bakhmut (Artemovsk) has often been called the key to Donetsk".

"Bakhmut is also a major transport and logistical hub because it's got two highways that are intersected and railroads that run north all the way to Moscow and then they go through south and then bend around down into

Donetsk city," Sleboda said.

Secondly, Bakhmut was the linch-pin of the entire second line of defence of the Kiev regime. "After that, there's only one last defensive line in Donetsk of any major node between Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, further to the west," Sleboda noted, adding that the liberation of Artemovsk would open the door to further advances of the Russian military forces in other directions.

Thirdly, the city's liberation ensures greater control of the Donetsk-Seversky Canal, which provides water to Donetsk city: the Kiev regime cut off the water supply to Donetsk five years ago.

The city has been of utmost importance to both sides since the beginning of the special military operation. Hence, the entire conflict has long centred on what happened there; and it is precisely for this reason that Kiev sent tens of thousands of reinforcements into the city to preserve control over this geostrategic and logistic hub.

Now, Kiev's loss of Artemovsk may also make a dent in the West's determination to funnel weapons to Ukraine, according to retired US Air Force Lt Col Karen Kwiatkowski, former analyst for the US Department of Defense.

"In practical and strategic terms, control of the city in its entirety allows the start of rebuilding and normalisation there for the people of the city, and real hope for the end of the [Artemovsk] 'meat-grinder'. While Ukrainian forces may still attack the city from the west and north, the decision on who holds the city is in practical terms already decided," she said.

Taking control of Artemovsk was a military victory that shows Russia is winning, says US military expert and former US Marine Corps intelligence officer Scott Ritter. "Russia has developed tactical operational and strategic advantages over Kiev that make it almost impossible for Ukraine's forces to be able to amass military power of sufficient quantity to carry out a sustained offensive operation," Ritter said, adding that future developments will show how Russia will use its new geo-strategic advantage.

Sputnik

The Cuban stethoscope in other lands

by Roberto Morejón

Cuban doctors in service in other latitudes confess their joy for being useful to the people, although they say they are moved when their patients cannot afford the cost of the tests required to reach an accurate diagnosis.

This is just one of the challenges that face more than 22,000 Cuban doctors deployed today in 57 countries on all continents, in many of whose scenarios poverty and lack of resources conspire against health activities.

More than 22,000 Cuban doctors are deployed today in 57 countries

The professionals in white coats in those nations are looking for alternatives so as not to fail to attend to those who come to their offices and when they travel through villages, small towns and remote jungles.

Cuba celebrates this week the 60th anniversary of international medical collaboration, officially started in Algeria, although a brigade had previously carried out a mission in Chile.

The global statistics illustrate the arduous, useful, highly technical



• Prime Minister Gaston Browne of Antigua & Barbuda with members of the Cuban Medical Brigade

work, with an outpouring of altruism, will, sacrifice and courage, because in many places the circumstances are complex.

More than 605,000 Cuban health professionals and technicians have saved lives, cured ailments, eradicated diseases and quieted the pain of carriers of incurable pathologies.

Recently, when lives were at stake during the COVID19 pandemic crisis 58 Cuban medical collectives went to 42 countries to fight that disease.

Despite the gratitude of the inhabitants of cities, towns and remote regions, the recognition of

authorities and praise in meetings of international organisations, in the USA and in the hegemonic press the Cuban doctors are demonised.

They are often labelled as 'slaves' by the Western media in ignorance of their willingness to work in other regions of the world, in compliance with governmental agreements.

With the income that some authorities pay to Havana, since in many cases the service is provided free of charge, Cuba buys supplies for its health system and keeps its medical schools open.

Thousands of new doctors graduate from

them every year, along with colleagues of other nationalities who, after gaining experience, often leave to work abroad.

Cuba, which supports the Henry Reeve contingent destined to work in the event of natural and other disasters, has just praised the performance of its envoys in Turkey following the earthquake.

The praise is extended to those who used their medical skills to save others over the last 60 years and those who continue their task stethoscope in hand today.

Radio Havana Cuba

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

On the Ukrainian question, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is surprised by the support Russia is garnering in the world instead of being isolated at all. That is why, at the G7, he urged his capitalist allies to "seize the moment" to ensure that Russia is defeated. To this, he added that not only does China pose the greatest challenge to global security and prosperity [that of capitalism], but China also has "the means and the intention to reshape the world order".

Where the British workers can speak up, they denounce the employers and the ministers whose policy is to cut public expenditure and keep (as always in history) the wages and the working conditions as crippled as possible. It is not just a 'reshaping of the world order' that Sunak is afraid of. He fears from China a reshaping prejudicial "to the global security" of the capitalist system of death and exploitation. To those who still condemn Russia in Ukraine, it should be an eye opener that Sunak has no hesitation in putting Russia – and China – in the category of countries that challenge capitalism's global security.

It is remarkable that the workers' strikes manage to continue and spread over many months without fizzling out. This can only happen because of the realisation that one cannot stop now. To abandon the struggle now would surrender to the employers the worker's right to immunity from retaliation after strikes, for instance, and other democratic rights, such as the right not to blackleg. It would make it harder to question what part of the national revenue might be used "to seize the moment" to ensure that Russia is defeated and China stopped from 'reshaping the world'.

Behind the perseverance of the hundreds of thousands of strikers in Britain, there lies the great conviction that the coun-

try's priority must be to social development, to true culture in education, to the protection of life, to the natural world, the climate, the planet. But there is also the objection of people to war, a world war to boot, with nuclear components already involved, a war where the USA and NATO already use Europe – Britain included – as the battleground for their war on Russia and China.

The defence of the standard of living now requires opposition to the national revenue diverted towards armaments, the training of Ukrainian marines, soldiers and pilots, the escalating supply of weapons to Ukraine, the routine world-war manoeuvres of NATO–USA–UK around north Korea and in the China sea.

There must be hue and cry about the storage of the B61-12 atomic bombs at Lakenheath. One must link the non-funding of labour power with the two per cent GDP contribution to NATO, taken out not only from taxation, but from the price rises that finance the sanctions on Russia (and its allies).

In the labour and trade union base, there are conditions to create currents ready to link the fight against the destruction of the public services with the fight against the world war of capitalism. It is worth noting the slogans proposed by the Young Communist League at Lakenheath: "Immediate withdrawal from NATO and imperialist alliances. Withdrawal of all US and NATO bases from the UK. Unilateral nuclear disarmament of the United Kingdom. Withdrawal from British bases overseas and repatriation of all military personnel. A foreign policy based on peace, co-operation and international development. And the reorientation of the defence budget towards public services."

Organisational forms are needed to uphold this programme. The conditions exist to transform some strike committees into permanent anti-war committees. The variety of organisations that joined CND in Lakenheath (on 20th May 2023) shows that it is possible, and urgent, to create fronts of solidarity between those who fight for wages and conditions, and those who repudiate absurd war on Russia and China that did us no harm, far from it.

Marie Lynam, N. London

Dear Comrades

The Pakistan Labour Federation (PLF) calls on the North Macedonian government to scrap dangerous changes to Labour Laws. The Pakistan Labour Federation (PLF) condemns the proposal to amend the labour legislation that has been submitted by the Government to the Assembly of North Macedonia, with the intention of using a fast-track parliamentary procedure to pass the changes into Law.

If this passed, the Legislation it would allow Employers to increase working hours up to 60 or even 72 hours per week across all seven days. Foreign and private-sector interests are suspected of pressuring the Government to make the changes, which are contrary to international labour standards.

Trade unions are concerned that the changes would increase the risk of accidents, injuries and deaths at work. If passed this would jeopardise North Macedonia's application to join the European Union (EU) because the proposals contravene EU working time directives. It would particularly affect construction workers who already face extreme conditions caused by climate change.

The reform of the country's labour legislation has been on the agenda for several years, but the recent direction taken by the Government marks a clear deviation from their expectations and the principles of social dialogue.

This legislation is dangerous. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has emphasised the importance of an eight-hour day and a 48-hour week to protect workers' health and safety. The Government of North Macedonia has a duty to uphold this and immediately withdraw this dangerous legislation. Then it must relaunch meaningful social dialogue with trade unions and other social partners to work on revisions to labour legislation that respect international and European standards.

Haji Muhammad Saeed Arian
Secretary General
Pakistan Labour Federation (PLF)
Lahore

Dear Comrades

Those who are trying to squeeze the struggle of the people into the ballot box should shut up from

now on!

The results of the second round of the presidential elections have been largely finalised. Of course, it cannot be said that what emerged as the outcome of the elections, which were pointed to determine the fate of Turkey, is a hope for a bright future.

However, all the people's political rights have been abolished. The right to strike was taken away. The possibilities of people to organise have been usurped. The determination to struggle was broken by the unity of the government and the opposition.

In other words, was it possible for people, who were in many ways disarmed, to succeed against this great darkness?

Against a government that for 20 years had maintained its power through oppression of the working class and the poor, through attacks on the values of the republic, could any victory be won without touching the pillars on which that power had risen; without calling for secularism, without calling for independence, without calling for nationalisation?

Erdoğan's defeat was a real possibility. If this possibility did not materialise, the reason should not be sought in Erdoğan's invincibility, but in the opposition's political style that deforms and disfigures the anti-Erdoğan stance of people. Forces representing labour cannot triumph in a political atmosphere paralysed by being confined to the ballot box.

Hope does not fit in the ballot box. Those who are trying to squeeze the struggle of this people into the ballot box should shut up from now on!

Let us again remind everyone that Erdoğan is weak and doomed to be defeated as long as our people have the self-confidence to stand up as they did 10 years ago.

The Communist Party of Turkey calls on the working people to organise in the ranks towards secularism, independence and socialism not only against the AKP government but also against all bourgeois solutions and fake oppositions. There is no room for pessimism.

This country is ours and we will surely be victorious!

Central Committee
Communist Party of Turkey (TKP)
Ankara

Diary

EVERY SATURDAY

Committee to Defend Julian Assange: Protests: 12:00-14:00, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, London SE28 and 16:00-18:00, Eros statue, Piccadilly Circus, London SW1.

UNTIL 9 SEPT

John Rylands Library: Workers' Playtime: culture and community in industrial Lancashire. Exhibition, 10:00-17:00 Weds-Sat. Free. Deansgate, Manchester

SAT 3 JUNE

Working Class Movement Library: Book launch: Lydia Hughes and Jamie Woodcock's Troublemaking: Why You Should Organise Your Workplace. 1400-15:00, WCML. Book on WCML website

SAT 3 – WED 14 JUNE

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Lissette Rubio Mederos on Cuban education. See CSC website for various venues.

SUN 4 JUNE

Caribbean Labour Solidarity: Socialism in the English-speaking Caribbean. 14:00. Zoom and YouTube meeting. Register on CLS website.

THURS 8 JUNE

Marx Memorial Library: Richard Burgon MP. Tony Benn and Labour's 1973-74 programme for "an irreversible shift of wealth and power in favour of working people". 19:00, Online and onsite, Book on MML website.

SAT 10 JUNE

Cuba Solidarity Campaign AGM and public meeting 10:00, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London, WC1H 9BD

SUN 11 JUNE

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Memorial Concert for Bruce Kent, 18:30-20:30, St Mellitus Church, Tollington Park, London, N4 3AG

UNTIL 16 JUNE

Working Class Movement Library: Photographs of Salford by Shirley Baker. Weds-Fridays afternoons. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX

SAT 17 JUNE

Derby Silk Mill Rally: commemoration of the 1833/34 struggle against pay cuts. Museum of Making, Derby DE1 3AF

SAT 17 JUNE

Jarrow Rebel Town Festival: Assemble 10:45, pedestrian tunnel, Tyne Street, Jarrow NE32.

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

The last week in May is General Assembly Week in Scotland, during which Scotland's Presbyterian churches hold their AGMs. This gives us an excuse to take the spiritual pulse of the nation.

Faded Grandeur

Once upon a time General Assembly of the Church of Scotland acted as a pretend parliament for Scotland that people paid attention to, but for more than two decades it has a rival at the bottom of the Royal Mile in Edinburgh. The "Auld Kirk" founded in 1560 does not take religion very seriously anymore. It is like the Church of England but without any bishops (although some ministers are fond of dressing up in fancy frocks), being more of a social club providing tea and cakes with added hymns than a serious religious body.

By the Church's own statistics, it is not what it used to be. It claims 283,600 members, in the late fifties it peaked at 1.3 million. Of the present membership only 60,000 attend Church regularly, a slump from the pre-Covid figure of 88,000, but they claim 45,000 online worshippers.

It owns more than 1,000 churches across Scotland and beyond, most of which hold one wedding per year and baptism. The average age of the members is a mere 62, and with only 430 new recruits last year it continues to go down the plughole. Almost 600 ministers are due to retire in the next decade, which will help it along the path of decline.

Once upon a time the Scottish Presbyterians sent missionaries out across the globe to convert the heathens, which was so successful that the process has been reversed and (as in the Catholic church) it has many ministers from ethnic minorities trying to save the Scottish heathens. Some hitherto abandoned churches have been taken over by happy-clappy churches in Glasgow, which highlights this trend.

The Assembly therefore opened with a warning that having its present number of churches to cater for the number of people attending was "simply untenable and unsustainable". This will happen, but not quickly as the Church of Scotland only takes decisions very slowly, and congregations tend to be very attached to their own buildings and loathe their neighbours too much to join them in brotherly love in a different building. The motion to start a programme of closures was passed by a very narrow margin, with lots of abstentions, which will mean lots of local infighting and nothing will actually get until the bailiffs start calling.

The Church of Scotland has its own foreign policy. This year it effectively accepted Zionism and repudiated an earlier pro-Palestinian report after "Inter-faith dialogue" with the Rabbis helped point them in a different direction. Demonstrating its traditional unwillingness to take a clear stand on anything, it once again avoided giving a view on independence.

In the course of Assembly deliberations it was interesting to learn from the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key, that on "every single day in every single unit around the world of His Majesty's Armed Forces, the Chaplaincy is fundamental to our operations". That will put the fear of God in Johnny Foreigner.

The Assembly also found time to denounce monuments to slavery in their churches. They are very keen on ethical investments, but take care to avoid actually withdrawing from dodgy companies and industries when the money is rolling in.

The Wee Frees and Others

The Presbyterian rivals to the Church of Scotland are much smaller, but they take their religion more seriously.

First is the Free Church of Scotland, which was founded in 1843 after a 10-year dispute over the right of congregations to elect their own clergymen. Whilst most of them merged with another church to form the United Free Church of Scotland in 1904, a much-reduced

Free Church continues, mostly in Highland and Islands and in lowland congregations catering to exiles. The Free Church also maintains an extensive mission programme that brings the Gospel to countries such as Poland and Greece, which clearly have never heard it before, but most heroically of all it tries to make converts in the south-side of Glasgow.

Just to show that the splendid Scottish tradition of warring Presbyterian tribes constantly splitting with each other is not dead, in 2000 a number of ministers and congregations left the Free Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). The dissenters were deeply distressed about the backsliding Free Church sinfully adopting uninspired hymns in their services instead of keeping strictly to unaccompanied psalms. To this day they still fight battles over the ownership of churches and manses, a traditional source of income for the legal profession.

The best of the Scottish Presbyterian churches, however, is the smaller Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which split from the Free Church in 1893 when its parent downgraded the importance of the 'Westminster Confession of Faith' for its ministers. In 1989 it attracted world-wide attention when it expelled the then Lord Chancellor, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, for the sin of attending the funeral of a Catholic judge. This caused another small split with the creation of yet another small church, the Associated Presbyterian Churches. The Free Presbyterians carry on regardless, attacking the Free Church for using the term "Sunday" rather than the correct Sabbath, denouncing Sunday sport, churches which permit women to attend without hats and other modern abominations too awful to be mentioned.

There are at least some thriving protestant churches in Scotland. In Glasgow the Kelvinside parish and St Andrew's parish churches are always busy with seekers of spiritual refreshment on the Sabbath, as are the West Kirk in Ayr and the Robertson Memorial Church in Edinburgh's Grassmarket. All four owe their success to having long been converted to public houses.

The Church of Rome

The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland is also seemingly in a state of terminal decline.

After the Reformation it was largely confined to the Highlands and Islands, but it expanded in the lowlands with large-scale Irish immigration after the Famine. It is now largely the church of their descendants, although the Italian influence remains strong. According to its own figures it has a larger membership than the Church of Scotland, but this is a fictional paper membership based on those whose strongest connection with the church is supporting Glasgow Celtic Football Club or its Edinburgh equivalent, Hibernia. Their next church attendance will likely be in a wooden box.

As in its other branches across the globe it is wracked with all sorts of sex scandals. Widespread abuse of children in Catholic schools and at church is catching up with them. Many hitherto devout Catholics have been sufficiently disgusted to vow never to darken a church door again.

Ironically one of the things keeping the Catholic Church going at present is the large number of Asian parents who choose to send their children to Catholic state schools, where they welcome the allegedly stricter discipline on offer.

In 2013 the Archbishop of St Andrews & Edinburgh, Keith O'Brien, was forced to resign after younger priests complained about his improper actions towards them. This opened up a right can of worms.

Since then neither of the two Scottish Archbishops have been promoted to Cardinal as the Vatican does not trust them further than they can be thrown.

It is not just the handful of Latin Mass traditionalists who suspect the existence of the "Daisy Chain" amongst the current bishops who allegedly owed their promotion to how friendly they were with O'Brien in their younger days. In one case a bishop's consecration was delayed when a disgruntled close friend of O'Brien who had been promised the job for services rendered hid the crozier before the service. In the Motherwell diocese a young priest was recently consecrated despite him proudly living a less than godly life at the Scots College in Rome, to the disgust of a few strait-laced priests who wonder what sort of hold he has over the Bishop.

No wonder Bishops are generally relieved with priests who simply live with their female 'housekeepers'.

Sassenachs

There are of course other denominations in Scotland. English dissent such as the Baptists, Quakers and Methodists has its small, largely irrelevant place.

The Anglican Church has its own native branch, the Episcopalian Church of Scotland. It too had a scandal involving its first ever woman bishop accused of bullying, but its main distinction is being the most liberal of all Scottish churches, blessing gay marriages, thus confirming John Knox's view of Episcopalianism.

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Korean solidarity in Liverpool

by New Worker correspondent

The Korean Friendship Association (KFA) of the UK took the fight to defend Democratic Korea to Merseyside by holding a vibrant afternoon meeting on Saturday 20th May at the Casa Bar in the heart of Liverpool's university district.

Peter Hendy from the Liverpool NCP introduced the meeting, saying: "The propaganda offensive against the DPRK Korea remains unabated. To justify US military aggression against the DPRK the propaganda offensive remains relentless and continues unabated. For over six decades the DPRK has been subjected to US military intimidation, provocations, threats and extensive



• at the Casa

sanctions to politically isolate and destroy the

DPRK economy. The US warmongers would like to

destroy the DPRK."

KFA UK Chairman

Dermot Hudson addressed the meeting on the subject of the US threat to People's Korea, pointing out that: "In fact, the danger of war and threat to People's Korea has increased greatly and taken a sinister turn. It is probably at its highest since the end of the Korean War or Fatherland Liberation War in 1953." He denounced the recent USA-south Korea summit and the so-called 'Washington Declaration'. He also drew attention to the participation of British Royal Marines in recent military exercises in south Korea.

Dermot concluded by saying: "We in the Korean Friendship Association of the UK believe in defending People's Korea, Korea of Juche, with No 'Ifs' or 'Buts'. The DPRK is the most independent country in the world and has a unique socialist system. The DPRK is a country that abolished taxation yet has free healthcare, free education and even free housing.

"The struggle to defend People's Korea and expose the aggressive role of

the USA on the Korean peninsula is also part of the struggle for world peace and for anti-imperialist independence.

"KFA UK demands that all ongoing and planned military exercises by the USA and south Korea in south Korea and the surrounding region should be cancelled. US troops should be withdrawn from south Korea along with any US nuclear weapons."

The Casa Club was born during the epic struggle of the Liverpool dockers who were sacked when they refused to cross a picket line in the 1990s.

The dockers' struggle began in September 1995 and ended in a one-sided settlement in February 1998. But some of the dockers, who had been paid £130,000 for writing a drama about the dispute for Channel Four, used the money to buy a building to set up a communal hub, not-for-profit bar and an advice centre. It is now a charitable trust that welcomes labour movement use of its rooms and facilities.

Stop US nukes coming to Lakenheath!

by New Worker correspondent

London comrades travelled to Suffolk last month to join hundreds of other anti-war campaigners outside the Lakenheath airbase in Suffolk on Saturday 20th May. The demonstrators were protesting against the return of US nuclear bombs to UK soil for the first time since 2008.

RAF Lakenheath is run by the Americans, who have recently added the UK to a list of NATO nuclear weapons storage locations in Europe being upgraded under a multi-million-dollar infrastructure programme. This means that US nuclear weapons will be returning to RAF Lakenheath.

Cumbria and Lancashire CND spokesperson, Philip Gilligan, who travelled to the protest on Saturday, told the media that: "The last thing the world needs at the moment is an escalation in



• Outside the airbase

nuclear sabre rattling. We need to be de-escalating the nuclear rhetoric, not importing more nuclear weapons of mass destruction to our shores. Doing so would not only add further instability to an already very dangerous international situation but would also increase the risks of a nuclear accident on British soil."

The Campaign for

Nuclear Disarmament, which organised the protest, has condemned the return of US nuclear weapons to Lakenheath and has launched a campaign to stop this extremely dangerous and destabilising development.

CND General Secretary Kate Hudson said: "The siting of these upgraded guided nuclear bombs at Lakenheath is not just a

matter of concern for the people of East Anglia, but for the entire country as it makes Britain a clear target in any nuclear confrontation between Russia and the USA. The aircraft used to deliver these bombs, the F-35, is also a significant polluter to the local area with one tank of fuel emitting the equivalent of 28 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

The F-35 programme has also been plagued with technical problems which remain unsolved and pose a serious accident risk. We're calling on the British government to deny any US request to site B61-12s at Lakenheath and to engage in serious efforts to de-escalate tensions between nuclear-armed states."

Dutch peace campaigner Guido van Leemput added that: "A new nuclear arms race is coming. Russia wants to station nuclear weapons in Belarus and the USA is going to deploy its upgraded B61-12 guided nuclear bomb across Europe, at Volkel Air Base in the Netherlands and possibly at Lakenheath. It's necessary to speak out loudly about the modernisation of nuclear weapons as part of a European-wide voice for peace."

CND says: "US nuclear weapons look set to return to RAF Lakenheath, a base in the UK that is run

by the US. Their return will only increase global tensions and put Britain on the frontline in a NATO/Russia war.

"The UK government can stop this from happening. If we show enough public resistance we can press them to reject these plans and prevent these terrible weapons from making us a target."

"The US Department of Defense has added the UK to a list of NATO nuclear weapons storage locations in Europe being upgraded under a multi-million-dollar infrastructure programme. This means that US nuclear weapons will be coming to RAF Lakenheath.

"110 nuclear bombs were stored at the airbase but they were removed by 2008 following persistent popular protest. Without public opposition, led by CND, they would still be here today. We stopped these weapons before – will you help us stop them again?"

War crimes – the real face of US foreign policy

by Bradley Blankenship

Under numerous banners – ranging from democracy to human rights and anti-terrorism – the USA has launched numerous wars, exported chaos and interfered in the internal affairs of countless nations around the world. In those countries where Washington has had or still has a military presence, it has left only ruin in its wake.

Between the end of the Second World War and 2001, there were 248 armed conflicts in 153 regions across the world, amongst which 201 were initiated by the USA. This means that the USA has started the overwhelming majority of conflicts in the modern, post-war global security status quo. That is quite remarkable and shows just how nefarious Washington's influence is around the world.

It is also important to look at the lingering impact of US occupation, even when Washington is not the victor. The most recent example is Afghanistan, where during its decades-spanning occupation, Washington created an economy that was totally dependent on the war effort. Entire market sectors fed off the huge sums of US taxpayer dollars and employed a significant percentage of the local workforce. Despite this dependence, in 2020 it was reported by the Asia Development Bank that 49.4 per cent of the population lived below the national poverty line. Prior to its so-called withdrawal, the USA did not help Afghanistan to create an independent economy and pulled out, immediately rendering countless workers unemployed and desperate. The United Nations Development Programme

predicted right after the withdrawal in August of 2021 that 97 per cent of the population could be in poverty by mid-2022, and indeed only one year after the withdrawal it was reported that 91 per cent of the average Afghan household's money was spent on food, forcing many families to resort to rationing and other coping strategies.

We can also go back to US aggression in Southeast Asia during the mid-to-late 20th Century. At that time, the USA was deeply entrenched in a genocidal war in Vietnam based on a false pretext. Whilst the country of Vietnam is seeing a meteoric rise in economic growth now, in 1995 the country released an official estimate that at least two million civilians and over a million North Vietnam soldiers died in the war, on top of nearly 60,000 US troops and between 200,000–250,000

south Vietnamese soldiers. Other nations in the region were caught in the crossfire, too, such as Laos. From 1964 to 1973, US invaders dropped more than 2.5 million tons of ordnance on the country during 580,000 bombing sorties. This would equate to a plane-load of bombs every eight minutes for nine years straight, which is double the amount dropped in Europe and Asia during the Second World War. This makes Laos the most bombed country per capita in history and unexploded ordnance still kills innocent people to this day.

Before the Vietnam era there was Washington's "forgotten war" in Korea. During that campaign, the USA used conventional weapons such as explosives, incendiary bombs, and napalm to the extent that nearly all of the country's cities and towns were destroyed. It is estimated that 85 per cent

of all buildings – including all buildings two stories and over – were levelled. US generals even mulled using tactical nuclear weapons on the border with China and the Soviet Union.

The estimated casualties from the three years and one month of conflict are put at roughly four million people – and it has still technically not ended today, with the USA consistently using division in the Korean peninsula as a means to impose its dominion over East Asia. Today, the USA is still militarily occupying parts of Syria despite having failed to topple the government of President Bashar al-Assad. Washington is stealing oil from the oil-rich, northeastern portion of the country whilst imposing strict sanctions on the country that are starving people and blocking basic access to key goods, such as medical supplies and

emergency supplies. It is estimated that 90 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, directly resulting from the US sanctions.

Note that this list of US conflicts is only those where the USA was driven out and forced to withdraw. This does not even touch on the litany of crimes where the USA and its allies actually achieved a military victory and imposed their will on the local population without impunity.

In my opinion, the fact that the USA has committed such terrible crimes in the wars – that is to say, that it has gone to such lengths with no serious national security threat to itself whatsoever but resorts to such malicious acts – shows just how evil the country's foreign policy is.

Global Times

Britain's secret war in Syria

by Ilya Tsukanov

The UK formally joined the US-led coalition against ISIS in 2014 and took part in the 2018 missile strikes on Syrian government targets after a false flag chemical attack in Douma. But the extent of British operations in the war-torn country has largely remained under wraps, especially in relation to the use of Britain's special forces.

British special forces began training so-called "moderate" Syrian rebels in 2011, conducting cross-border raids into the country in 2012, and engaging in the killings of British nationals inside the war-torn country soon after the start of the US-led coalition's campaign against ISIS, the London-based non-profit Action on Armed Violence has revealed.

A comprehensive analysis by the group of credible

reports on covert British military operations in over a dozen countries over the last dozen years found that special forces units were "regularly" deployed into Syria despite explicit prohibitions on doing so in a 2013 parliament ruling. These operations included the provision of military equipment, training and intelligence assistance to Syrian rebel commanders in Lebanon and Turkey at the start of the conflict, and Special Air Service (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS) raids into the country via Jordan starting in the summer of 2012.

The non-profit's analysis confirmed that before the 2013 parliamentary vote, special forces troops and MI6 agents had been deployed to the region in order to mark out Syrian air defences that might be used to target British jets. Special forces units were also heavily involved in operations in Syria's



• Syrian troops on the road to victory!

north starting shortly after the start of the US-led coalition's air war, with British troops occasionally wearing American military uniforms and using US weapons to evade parliamentary restrictions on boots on the ground. In other instances, special forces troops would

disguise themselves as ISIS fighters or their wives, purportedly helping them conduct raids in Syria's east.

The analysis also confirmed the deployment of SAS commandos in Syria and Iraq to assassinate British nationals accused of fighting for ISIS, and as

snipers and reconnaissance units to call in air, drone and mortar strikes by British and US forces.

British cross-border raids reportedly included the provision of assistance to US forces occupying al-Tanf in southern Syria, including to help train the so-called 'New

Syrian Army', a militia group which Damascus and its allies classify as ISIS remnants and other jihadi gunmen trained for operations against the Syrian government by the West.

SAS forces suffered a fatality in March 2018 after a trooper was killed together with a US commando in a friendly-fire incident involving American forces, with the incident initially blamed on a roadside bomb. Two more SAS troops were injured after being hit by a missile in January 2019. The compilation of secret British special forces activities in Syria surfaced in the wake of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's decisive diplomatic victory in the decade-long dirty war against him, demonstrated by Syria's triumphant return to the Arab League earlier this month.

Sputnik

Erdoğan wins again

by Ilya Tsukanov

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan secured a third term in office on Sunday. Under his watch, Ankara has pursued arguably its most independent foreign policy since Turkey's entry into the NATO alliance in 1952. Erdoğan doubled down on efforts to escape Washington's grip after the USA tried to coup him in 2016.

Turkey's refusal to bend to demands by the West to sever ties with Russia has led to "incredible pressure" being placed on Ankara says Erdoğan spokesman Ibrahim Kalin.

"Have other countries not put pressure on us? Of course they have...for a year-and-a-half, Western countries are putting incredible pressure on us, demanding that we slap sanctions [on Russia], asking why we co-operate with Russia, etc. But we didn't listen to anyone and held a ceremony on the delivery of the first fuel to the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant," Kalin told the media.

Highlighting Turkey's transformation into an "independent, self-sufficient" power on the world stage, Kalin stressed that Ankara will continue to "try to develop our

relations of mutual interest with everyone".

"We have had two main problems [with the USA] since the Obama era – the [US] support given to the YPG/PYD [Kurdish movements], and the FETO issue," the presidential spokesman said, referring to Washington's support for the Kurdish militias which Ankara classifies as "terrorists", and America's refusal to extradite Fethullah Gulen, a Turkish cleric whom Turkish officials blame for the July 2016 coup attempt against Erdoğan.

"The United States is one of the important actors with whom we have

relations. We are looking at our relations with Russia, China and the European Union in this perspective. When I went to the USA, I met with all of their senators. Senators who have used F-16s as political leverage. Of course, we would like the purchase of F-16s to progress. But if it doesn't, it is not the end of the world for Turkey. But we will not allow them to take us prisoner. We are developing alternatives," Kalin said.

The Biden administration expressed interest in "moving forward" on the sale of F-16 fighter jets and modernisation kits to Turkey last week. Lawmakers in Congress

have held up an arms deal, however, attempting to tie their approval to Ankara ratifying Sweden's bid to join NATO. Turkish officials have said that they will not do so until their security concerns are met.

The talks between Ankara and Washington on F-16s come after Turkey's unceremonious ousting from the F-35 programme in 2019 over its purchase of a Russian-made missile defence system.

Turkey and Hungary became the only two NATO member countries refusing to sever economic, political and trade ties with Moscow after the escalation of the conflict in the Donbas into a full-fledged proxy war between Russia and

the West. Ankara helped to facilitate peace talks between Moscow and Kiev in the spring of 2022, and to negotiate an agreement on the export of Ukrainian grain known as the 'Black Sea Grain Initiative'. President Erdoğan refused to join Western sanctions against Moscow, and Turkey has served as an important route for the transit of goods and people into and out of Russia over the last year.

Russia surpassed China as Turkey's largest trade partner last year, with trade jumping from \$34.73 billion in 2021 to \$58.85 billion in 2022. Moscow and Ankara are negotiating a major agreement to turn Turkey into a major hub for natural gas deliveries to Europe.

Sputnik

Kissinger at 100: still a war criminal

by the Editor of
Workers World

Henry Kissinger was 100 years old on 27th May 2023, offering proof that world-class war criminals can escape punishment if they commit their crimes in the service of US imperialism.

Kissinger was National Security Adviser to President Richard Nixon and then Secretary of State under Nixon and President Gerald Ford. Many of his well-wishers in the ruling class and its media are using this birthday to note his role in US "diplomacy" during that period, 1969–77.

Like the late Zbigniew Brzezinski, the global strategist who served Democratic Party presidents, Kissinger was a European migrant to America, who provided the intellectual framework for imperialist policies during the Cold War. Kissinger provided the rationale for the mass murders committed under Republican presidents, and Brzezinski for the Democrats.

Most in the ruling-class media will praise him. Some may point out flaws. For those who evaluate his role from the point of view of the working and exploited peoples of the world, what stands out are his crimes and that the goal of these crimes was to continue the domination

of much of the world by a tiny group of super-rich capitalists and bankers.

His greatest, though not his only, crimes were committed against the peoples of Southeast Asia, specifically the Vietnamese and Cambodians.

Yes, it was the Democrats in the Lyndon Johnson administration who escalated the war and sent more than a half-million US troops to Vietnam by 1968. But the January–February Tet Offensive that year showed the weakness of the American intervention. By late 1969, besieged by protests, the Nixon administration had already begun to withdraw troops; negotiations became inevitable.

Kissinger and Nixon began negotiations, but their policy included stepping up the bombing of the Vietnamese people. In an attempt to stop the Vietnamese from liberating their country, Kissinger even threatened to use nuclear weapons against them. In the end, the USA rained more tonnage of bombs on Vietnam than all the allied bombers dropped on Germany in the Second World War, costing millions of Vietnamese lives.

Kissinger pushed for the bombing of Cambodia, overthrowing the neutral government and killing hundreds of thousands of Cambodians in the

countryside. This policy left a chaotic situation that eventually led to the deaths of many more Cambodians.

In an insult to the Vietnamese people fighting for their liberation, in 1973 the Nobel Committee tried to offer the Peace Prize to Kissinger and to the Vietnamese patriot, Le Duc Tho, as they had both signed the peace treaty. Le Duc Tho, then-spokesperson for the North Vietnamese delegation to the Paris Peace Talks, refused to jointly accept it with the war criminal. The Vietnamese communists were not only heroic, they were also principled.

As Secretary of State, Kissinger oversaw the CIA's overthrow of the elected government of President Salvador Allende in September 1973 in Chile. Replacing Allende was the military dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet, which murdered tens of thousands of Chileans and opened the country to a takeover by imperialist banks and corporations.

Kissinger's policies gave a green light to the

generals in Argentina to torture, murder and arrest tens of thousands of Argentines. Despite its love of the Argentine generals, Washington still backed its junior partner, British imperialism, in the war to reconquer Argentina's Malvinas islands in 1982. That list omits many of Kissinger's crimes. But it's enough for a conclusion.

The important question is not whether Kissinger was an effective strategist for US imperialist interests. That's a question of interest only to the ruling class.

The important question involves what happened as a result of his conduct. Our conclusion: To expand the interests of a tiny class of billionaires, Kissinger provided the strategy for carrying out war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Those who fought against those crimes did the right thing. Those who defend those crimes and celebrate the birthdays of their centenarian perpetrators are the enemies of the vast majority of the world's people.

Workers World (US)



Kissinger and Pinochet congratulate each other

Racism in Florida and Spain

by Roberto Morejón

Signs of intolerance towards minorities were recently reiterated from the governor's office in Florida and the stands of a Spanish stadium.

The ultra-conservative Ron DeSantis, who intends to challenge the no less retrograde Donald Trump for the Republican Party's candidacy for the US presidential elections in 2024, exhibits as "endorsement" his frenetic policies in Florida.

Without having judicial lawsuits on his back like his adversary, the real estate magnate, DeSantis boasts of his extreme positions like Trump.

The Florida governor unleashes culture wars against those he calls progressive or left-wing exponents, in areas such as racial justice, which he believes should not be taught in schools, sexual orientation and gender identity.

Amongst the banners raised by DeSantis are his calls to transform the education system in the southern state because, in his opinion, what he calls "indoctrination", that is, teachers' attempts to explain to their students concepts of modern life, should be limited.

But the Republican who controls the Florida governor's office also

has emulators in the Old Continent.

Vinicius Júnior

This was highlighted by the discriminatory incident against the Brazilian soccer player Vinicius Júnior at the Mestalla stadium, where the Real Madrid player once again received racist abuse from fans.

The outcry was immediate. Brazilian president, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, was very graphic in his expressions on the matter: "We cannot allow fascism and racism to take over the stadiums."

Part of the international press emphasised that this is not an isolated fact because they reflect the structural racism in the First World.

Non-governmental organisations have denounced the mass media of the industrialised North that feed the prejudiced, especially in the face of what they consider as danger such as the arrival of boats with illegal immigrants.

The Vinicius episode and the excesses of Ron DeSantis are two expressions of the advance of the extreme right in industrialised societies that, with supposedly nationalist discourses, try to hide their hatred of diversity.

Radio Havana Cuba