

Western hints of peace following failure on all fronts

by our Eastern European
Affairs correspondent

Fierce fighting continues as the Ukrainian summer offensive peters out in waves of futile attacks along the southern front. Russian forces advance in the northern Donbas, forcing the Ukrainians to order the evacuation of nearly 12,000 civilians in 37 towns and villages in the Kharkov region. In the air Russian missiles struck military targets throughout Ukraine including Kiev and the ‘western capital’ of Lvov. Ukrainian drones targeted Moscow and roads and bridges in Crimea, but most of their flying bombs were downed by the Russian defences.

The Zelensky offensive began in June but the Ukrainians have little to show for it apart from a few villages in the south paid for in horrendous losses in men and material, economic ruin and a crippling blockade.

The Russians are tightening the noose, with repeated drone and missile attacks on docks and grain silos in the Black Sea port of Odessa and Ukraine’s river ports on the Danube near the border with Ro-



mania. The Americans are still refusing to respond seriously to Russian offers to restore the “grain deal” that allowed safe-passage for Ukrainian grain exports in return for similar concessions to Russian commerce that were never honoured. Neutral ships can still sail to Ukraine – but only with the approval of the Russian Black Sea Fleet.

Last week a Russian patrol vessel, the *Vasily Bykov*, boarded the *Sukri Okan* that was bound for a Ukrainian port on the Danube. The Turkish cargo ship, flying the flag of convenience of the Pacific island of Palau, was boarded after the captain had seemingly ignored hails from the Russian ship to stop for an inspection. Russian marines then inspected the vessel to ensure it was not carrying contraband such weapons or other military equipment before allowing the ship to proceed to the Danubian port of Izmil.

The imperialists had placed all their bets on the Zelensky offensive and

their “game-changing” new weapons that were supposed to bring the Russians to their knees this summer. Their high hopes have been dashed in the trenches and dug-outs of the Russian front and now more realistic voices are being heard, such as that of NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg’s chief of staff, Stian Jenssen, who said Ukraine could trade land for NATO membership and an end to the fighting during a debate in Norway last week.

“I think that a solution could be for Ukraine to give up territory, and get NATO membership in return,” Jenssen said at the debate, according to Norway’s *Verdens Gang* (VG) newspaper. This discussion is already underway within NATO, he said, suggesting that it could be a “possible solution” to the conflict.

This “solution” has clearly been going to rounds for some time in the corridors of power in the West. Back in February the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* daily claimed that CIA Director

William Burns had offered Russia a “land for peace” deal in which Moscow would keep “20 per cent of Ukrainian territory”. But the White House, the CIA and the Kremlin all denied that such a proposal had ever been made.

Ukrainian National Se-

curity and Defence Council chief Alexei Danilov, a hardline Ukrainian nationalist, stated on Tuesday that Kiev will never negotiate with the Putin government, that none of Ukraine’s Western backers are pushing for peace, and that “Russia must be destroyed like a modern-day Carthage”. But at the end of the day it hardly matters as the Ukrainians must do whatever their masters want – there are plenty willing to take Zelensky’s place if he’s found wanting in Washington.

The real problem is whether this would meet the Kremlin’s demands. Offering the Russians what they’ve already got is hardly generous and one of Russia’s key war-aims, apart from the complete liberation of the Donbas, is to keep Ukraine out of NATO.

FUND

New Worker readers raised £1,220 for the fighting fund this week, pushing the needle up to £1,890 thanks to a Southall comrade who sent in £300 and another from Dagenham who gave us £60. A Kirkaldy supporter sent in £40 and a pillar of this appeal in Essex posted £30. We now need £1,610 to hit our August target!

Wherever the imperialists go death and destruction follow. Their greedy eyes focus on Niger whilst their minions ferment sectarian violence in the Middle East and prolong the senseless slaughter in Ukraine. But the people’s democracies and millions upon millions of working people in the Global South are closing ranks to resist them. We are part of that struggle. Help us keep up the fight by supporting the *New Worker* fighting fund.

All donations, big or small, help keep our presses rolling. Please send your donation to: New Worker Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the ‘New Worker’.

**To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here:
<http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>**

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The change that Scotland needs...

North of the border the media pundits are focusing on the forthcoming by-election in south Lanarkshire and Labour's efforts to take the seat from the Scottish nationalists. Sir Keir Starmer tells the voters that he's going to "smash the class ceiling" and deliver a new deal for workers' rights.

The Scottish nationalists, battling to keep the seat for the SNP, tell the people of Rutherglen & Hamilton West that "every vote for the SNP will send a message that only the powers of independence will deliver the change Scotland needs".

The SNP is dipping in the opinion polls following Ms Sturgeon's resignation and amidst the ongoing police investigation into the party's finances, and the bookies make Labour the odds-on favourite to win the seat.

Starmer says: "What we're being absolutely clear about is an anti-poverty strategy driven by an incoming Labour government will focus on growing the economy and making sure we get that growth in every part of the country. The single worst thing you could do for child poverty is to re-elect a Tory government or re-elect another SNP government here in Scotland."

Katy Loudon, the SNP candidate, will try to outflank Scottish Labour on the social agenda whilst reminding voters of her party's Remain credentials.

Labour's man, Michael Shanks, tells the media he believes "in the European project" and says he would back reversing Brexit if there was a public appetite for a rethink – which is not official Labour policy, although it does reflect the stand of the bureaucracy in most of the major unions.

The SNP upholds a veneer of internal democracy but like all bourgeois parties the real decisions are made by a handful of power-brokers at the top. Nicola Sturgeon was brought down through the exploitation by these factions of financial scandals surrounding the party and this has naturally created a credibility gap amongst the electorate.

Although the SNP like to pose as social-democrats they are, in fact, bourgeois liberals. Their modest social reform programme that included free prescription charges and the abolition of student tuition fees was, in the past, enough to win tens of thousands of traditional Labour supporters over to the nationalist camp. Whether they can retain that support is another matter.

Labour's problem is that nobody can believe a word Starmer says these days. He's broken virtually every pledge he made to the unions and the membership when he first became leader. He lost the confidence of the Remainers who thought he would take up their call for a second referendum. His only loyalty is to the Blairite faction that believes in serving US imperialism and what they perceive to be the dominant trend in the British ruling class.

As always, the SNP are hoping for a hung parliament after the next election. Their new leader Hamza Yousaf says the SNP could make life "very difficult" for Labour in a hung parliament if it refused to give Scotland the power to call a new independence referendum. Labour has naturally ruled out a new 'Indie' referendum or any sort of coalition with the SNP. But Yousaf says nothing about a possible deal with the Tories and the Liberal Democrats or the 'other' referendum that the Remainers across the bourgeois spectrum are determined to get.

Creating the conditions for a hung parliament is a difficult task for any block to accomplish in British politics. But it can be done. We saw that at the 2017 election. We also saw how close the Remainers were to reversing the Brexit vote during the days that followed.

A hung parliament may well give Yousaf a second referendum but it may not be quite what the SNP faithful have in mind...

HSBC call to resist American interference

by Wang Yi

Sherard Cowper-Coles, HSBC's head of public affairs and a former British diplomat, has apologised for saying the UK government was weak by giving in to US pressure to cut back on its dealings with China.

In terms of common sense, however, what the HSBC executive said was nothing but a normal and rational comment as a British businessman. "The UK should follow its own interests rather than simply accept the USA's position," Cowper-Coles said at a private event in London in June, *Bloomberg News* reported.

The fact that Cowper-Coles has had to apologise for such a normal comment highlights just how hard the USA is pressing its allies in terms of interfering with their normal economic and trade co-operation with China, and the difficulties and pressures the US government has brought to foreign companies such as HSBC.

HSBC is a London-based multinational bank, with most of its revenue coming from China. The Chinese mainland and Hong Kong contributed around 44 per cent of HSBC's profit in 2022. For a company largely benefiting from the Chinese market, the arbitrary requests of the USA to cut back on its deals with China seriously affect its business growth and are apparently unaffordable.

Amongst a continuing wave of Western CEOs visiting China this year despite the USA's and some Western countries' "de-risking" rhetoric, HSBC Chief Executive Noel Quinn visited Beijing in March. His visit to China fully reflected the importance of the Chinese market against the backdrop of a gloomy global economic outlook. China's insistence on opening-up and its willingness to share dividends with foreign companies bring them huge opportunities.

HSBC's director of public affairs has apologised for his comments, but he had voiced the thoughts of many business leaders in the UK.

His call for reflection on safeguarding Britain's interests is something the UK's economy and companies desperately need. Affected by multiple factors such as Brexit, the epidemic and geopolitical conflicts, the British economy has been in a predicament in recent years.

A large part of the reason this situation exists is that, in recent years, the UK's economic and trade policies, especially those towards China, were not completely based on the perspective of British economic interests but reflected the political pressure of the USA.

A year ago, the *Sunday Times* published an edited extract from a book by British investigative journalist Richard Kerbaj that revealed how the USA essentially forced Britain to block Chinese tech giant Huawei from the UK's 5G network development. The UK followed the US ideological lead to ban Huawei, but it ended up spending more money and delaying the country's 5G rollout.

Although the UK is expected to avoid a recession this year, the country still faces a challenging economic outlook. It is necessary for the UK government to maintain trade policy autonomy and prioritise the UK's own interests to boost its economy. The consequences of more deci-

sion-making that only caters to US requests will inevitably create more problems for the UK economy, further delaying its recovery.

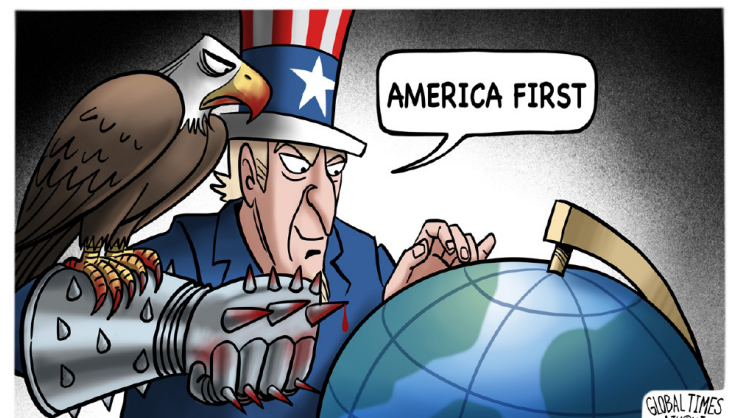
Originally, after Brexit, the UK had hoped to reach free trade agreements to boost trade and develop domestic industries and the economy. But negotiations on a free trade agreement between the UK and the USA have gone nowhere.

The delay reflects the consistent approach of the USA to put its own interests before those of its allies. The UK's hope to realise an economic recovery by promoting trade with the USA has almost failed.

In stark contrast, the importance of trade with China is self-evident. More importantly, China has expressed willingness to expand trade and economic co-operation with other economies including the UK. There still remains huge untapped potential for China-UK trade.

It's time for British anti-China politicians to heed the calls of British business leaders to get rid of US interference in formulating the economic and trade co-operation policies towards China. If the UK lets the USA take the lead when dealing with economic and trade co-operation with China, the ones who will continue to pay the bill for such wrong policies are British companies such as HSBC, and the British economy will continue to be hurt as a result.

Global Times



Workers' Notes

Striking to save the NHS

by New Worker correspondent

London's junior doctors walked out last week for a long weekend four-day strike over pay. They joined tens of thousands of other junior doctors in England taking part in the industrial action called by the British Medical Association (BMA). The strike began just nine days after thousands of Foundation Year 1 doctors in England started their in-hospital training.

Almost 835,000 appointments have been postponed since the campaign began in December.

Junior doctors in the NHS in England are taking strike action to achieve full pay restoration to reverse the steep decline in pay faced by junior doctors since 2008/9; agree on a mechanism with the Government to prevent any future declines against the cost of living and inflation; and to reform the DDRB (Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body) process so that pay increases can be recommended independently and fairly to safeguard the recruitment and retention of junior doctors.

The National Maximum Wage

by New Worker correspondent

In late July 1998 the National Minimum Wage Act came was given the Royal Assent. This was the main concession the new New Labour Government of Tony Blair offered to the working class. He took care to ensure that the main provisions of the Tory anti-union laws and their abolition of wages councils, which had done at least something for the low paid, remained in place.

As raising wages for the low paid was not an urgent matter it only actually came into force in April of the following year after the Low

Pay Commission (LPC) was established, presently it is a non-departmental public body of the Department of Business and Trade and makes its presence felt once a year by announcing the increase for the coming year.

The measure was opposed from the right by those who said it would impose extra costs on business. If employers had to pay decent wages, then inflation, redundancies and bankruptcies would stalk the land. That is happening at present, but it has more to do with excessive profits and nothing to do with cleaners' excessive wages.

From Blair's perspective this was part of his vow to lift people out of poverty. It was a major part of his 'welfare-to-work' promises, which sought to ensure that work would pay more than being on benefits or welfare.

Although it was always a myth that people lived a life of luxury on benefits, it was true that a life of hardship on benefits was very often not much worse than a life working for low pay. In fact some jobs could not exist without low pay.

At the time there were a few left critics of the measure, one of which was the NCP which argued that better trade union organisation and working-class struggle was the answer. Warnings that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) would become the maximum wage went unheeded – however this was a lone voice. The measure was supported by the TUC, not least because of promised seats on

the LPC for a few lucky trade union bureaucrats.

When the National Minimum Wage (NMW) was first established, it was set at the rate of £3.60 per hour for those over 22-years-old with £3.00 for those between 18 and 22. At the time, it was not just the 'hard left' who thought these rates were too low.

At present there are five rates, ranging from £5.28 for 16–17-years-old and for apprentices. It is £7.49 for 18–20-year-olds, £10.18 between 21–22, rising to £10.42 for those over 23.

The NMW makes no provision for overtime rates, a serious matter as shift working has largely replaced overtime. For instance, supermarket workers no longer get Sunday and late night payments.

The measure was a predictably New Labour measure that was designed not to frighten the bourgeois. Apart from the low level, the LPC was not given resources to enforce the law. On page nine we show just one way of getting around the law by pretending that workers are 'volunteers'.

Enforcement has always been lax. There have been enforcement orders, but there are no penalties apart from having to cough up back-pay to actual complainants unless they refuse to act on an enforcement order. It took years for the present 'naming and shaming' of those not paying to start.

There is no proactive action by HMRC to enforce it, it is up to under-paid workers to take action. As they are often in the least organised sectors,

the result of asking for more often results in the same fate as happened to Oliver Twist when he made that same request (he got walloped with a ladle).

The lower rates for younger workers is a particular bone of contention. It is difficult to unite workers around this issue, however, as it is generally agreed that older workers should get increments as they get older.

Soon after the measure came into being it was common to see long list of job advertisements in newspapers stating that that jobs "adhered to the minimum wages legislation", which was simply a means of saying the wages were going to be very low indeed.

The inadequacies of the government's NMW is thrown into stark relief by the concept of the Living Wage, which was established by the Living Wage Foundation (LWF). The LWF was established in 2011 by the campaign group London Citizens and is supported by the respectable Joseph Rowntree Foundation. They argue that "that paying a Living Wage is not merely ethical, but also constitutes business best practice and improves productivity", so they are hardly revolutionaries.

The present LWF figures of £10.90 per hour outside London and £11.95 inside London were announced last September. At present there are 13,000 employers accredited by the LWF. The first to sign up was fashion chain Next who did so after the LWF asked awkward questions at



an AGM, a tactic somewhat different from normal trade union practice.

Payment of the LWF's Real Living Wage is purely voluntary and should not be confused by the LPC's decision to change the Sunday name of the NMW to the "National Living Wage", which is clearly less. The official figure aims to be the equivalent to 60 per cent of median UK earnings.

Trade unions argue that both LPC and LWF rates are not enough. About this time last year the Trades Union Congress issued a demand for a £15 per hour minimum, but in true TUC tradition has not been hyper active in advocating it.

When it was launched the TUC called upon "the government to work with the Low Pay Commission (LPC) to deliver it as soon as possible, over time". The parodic Fabian chant of "What do we want? Moderate progress within the law! When do we want it? Whenever resources permit!" became reality.

The TUC correctly says that the £15 per hour would help deliver the "high wage economy" everyone pays lip service to but errs in saying it would "deliver workers their fair share of the wealth they create" – but it would at least be a small improvement. It also says that a new minimum wage should be set at 75 per cent of median hourly pay, and that the £15 should be paid to all workers. It started at 47 per cent in 1999 and even under the Tories is creeping towards the 66 per cent hoped for next year. The Prime Minister-in-waiting Sir Keir Starmer has poured cold water on any plans to increase the minimum wage.

It is clear, however, that the NMW has failed even on its own terms. The reality is that even going by official figures there is more in-work poverty with people in full time employment needing benefits to survive. This is a damning indictment of the NMW. The benefits system is being used not to assist those in trouble, but to subsidise employers who are enabled to get away

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with paying low wages.

Blair's other major employment measure, the 1999 Employment Relation Act, did not do much for workers. It claimed to undo the worst of Tory anti-trade union laws and was supposed to make it impossible for employers to sack people for attempting union organisation, outlaw blacklisting, improve access to workplace training, improvements were made to maternity leave, and to guarantee the right to someone to accompany employees to disciplinary hearings. This was introduced only after pressure from unions but the improvements, although welcome, were comparatively minor. Once again, the mechanisms for enforcement are conspicuous by their absence.

Blair openly boasted that his twin measures left Britain the "most lightly regulated labour market in the European Union", with further consequences.

Insecure Hours

Low wages are bad enough, but for many people uncertain hours compound the hardship.

Early this month the LWF foundation issued a report that demonstrated the extent of insecure work in Britain.

Over six million UK work-

ers are in insecure work, about 20 per cent of the workforce, of whom 3.4 million are in low-paid jobs. Most receive very short notice of changes. In these cases the vast majority receive no compensation for the cancellation of work. This results in 22 per cent being forced into debt or reliance on credit.

Those who are affected are in essential jobs, such as 878,000 health and social care workers. The NHS as well as private employers are both guilty parties. The Wholesale and Retail sector come a close second, with Accommodation and Food services with 527,000 workers coming a close third, narrowly ahead of the 503,000 workers in the Education sector who are affected.

The costs of cancelled shifts are not just the lack of wages. Insecure workers have the alternative of seeing season tickets go to waste, or alternatively to use more expensive daily fares. These other costs can amount to a loss of £600 from low annual wages. Conversely, unplanned childcare burdens other workers.

The LWF claims that it is getting more employers signed-up to provide reasonable hours and compensation.

It has 100 so far covering 50,000 workers, which by its own figure is a drop in the ocean.

To secure accreditation employers commit to at least four weeks' notice for every shift and guaranteed payments if shifts are cancelled. Accredited employers must also provide a guaranteed minimum of 16 hours every week and a contract that accurately reflects hours worked. That such modest measures have to be begged for says much about the state of labour relations in Britain.

Katherine Chapman, CEO of the LWF, stated the obvious by saying: "Soaring prices have rightly shone a spotlight on pay this past year, but this research makes clear that reliable working hours are as vital to workers' financial resilience as a real Living Wage. It is shocking that 3.4 million workers are facing the cost-of-living crisis in low paying jobs with unstable working hours, making planning a life and a budget impossible."

She is wrong, however, in saying that "action is required by both employer and the government". It is trade unions that must step up organising in these sectors. Britain's unions are big enough to launch campaigns and have enough in the

bank to sustain temporary setbacks until the battle is won.

Paying to Work

by New Worker correspondent

Even though motor cars give off polluting exhaust fumes, many workers such as health visitors and repairmen need to use their own cars to get perform their jobs.

Last month the RAC Foundation, in a report titled *Driven Out of Work*, said that frontline workers depending on their cars for work lost an average of £6,000 due to out-of-date mileage rates.

In detail, the Foundation calculated that approved mileage allowance payments (AMAPs) should be 63.4p per mile, a significant increase on the existing official HMRC rate of 45p, which surprisingly has not been updated since 2011. Then petrol was £1.28 per litre, now it is around £1.44, but other motoring costs have increased far more since then.

Nursing Notes reported the case of an NHS worker in Leicester, who explained: "I can't afford to top my car up to see patients in their homes. I have sleepless nights as a result. I'm now thinking of leaving a job I love." Other

staff said they are using up annual leave rather than go into work, or calling in sick because they have run out of fuel and cannot afford to fill up their vehicles.

Public services union Unison is demanding that not only should rates be increased to the RAC level and be regularly reviewed, but that the cap should be raised from 3,500 to 10,000 miles and the rates not subject to annual pay talks. It also demands greater investment in public sector Electric Vehicle (EV) fleet rollout, including a grey fleet scrappage scheme similar to the Mayor of London's ultra-lower emission zone scheme that offers support to low-income drivers to scrap the most polluting vehicles.

General secretary Christina McAnea complained that: "Mileage rates are woefully out of date. No-one should pay a penalty effectively for doing their job, least of all those providing vital services.

"Petrol prices have skyrocketed. Care workers, nurses and other frontline employees can barely make their incomes stretch to cover the basics, let alone the costs of using their vehicles for work."

Motoring costs are not the only example of workers having to pay for their jobs. *HR Magazine* reports that 67 per cent of employees surveyed are having to pay for work-related expenses with their own money at least once a week. For a fifth this happens every day, with the same percentage of these waiting a month or more for reimbursement.

As a result this extra pressure on their private bank accounts caused half of employees to use their credit cards at least weekly, with about a fifth needing an overdraft.

Carlo Gualandri, founder and CEO of Soldo which conducted the research, was quoted as saying that employers could not sit back and allow their employees to use their own money for work-related expenses. His company has a vested interest in the matter as he is trying to sell credit cards to bosses, which he says will reduce the problem. But it is a real issue.

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

New Worker 22nd August 2003

DEVASTATING RESISTANCE attacks in Baghdad and Jerusalem shattered imperialist dreams of dominating the Arab world this week. Last Tuesday a truck packed with explosives rammed the United Nation headquarters in Baghdad. The same day another bomb blew up a bus in Jerusalem.

At least 18 people were killed, including the UN special representative for Iraq, Sergio Vierra de Mello, in the attack on the UN compound in the occupied Iraqi capital. Over 100 others were injured.

Iraqi resistance forces launched a new

offensive against the American-led occupation army last week. Oil pipelines have been blown up, utilities sabotaged and US patrols and convoys ambushed throughout central and southern Iraq.

No-one has claimed responsibility for the Baghdad bombing. But the Jerusalem attack was carried out by a member of the Islamic resistance in revenge for the killing of several of their leaders. Twenty Israelis were killed and over 100 injured in the attack carried out by a suicide bomber.

"Israel started the bloodshed. The Israeli army assassinated our activists in Jenin and Hebron and it is carrying out daily attacks against our people," a spokesman for Islamic Jihad declared.

"Everyone had expected a revenge attack by Islamic Jihad following Israel's killing of senior Jihad operative Mohammed Sidr last week. Violence begets violence as history and daily life remind us," the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group said.

General Sharon, the leader of Israel's hard-line Zionist coalition government, has called off planned talks with the Palestinian Authority and is threatening to take reprisals of his own unless the Authority cracks down on the Islamic movements.

Palestinian premier Mahmoud Abbas has condemned the bombing and has ordered the arrest of Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders. But this can only undermine what little credibility he has left with the Palestinian Arabs.

The worthless Iraqi "interim council", comprised largely of hand-picked Iraqi émigrés with a long track-record of service to imperialism, has no standing with the Iraqi masses nor the Arab world. It does the bidding of the American governor, Paul Bremer, who himself is now only a cover for the American military administration. And that administration's authority stretches little beyond the US army barracks and their army's roving patrols.

People's China – giant strides along the road to socialism

On the 24th June, Peter Hendy from the New Communist Party of Britain (NCP) joined other communists from North America, Scandinavia, Australia and the UK, including General Secretary Rob Griffiths of the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), as guests of the Communist Party of China. They arrived in Guangzhou in southern China to visit Guangdong and Guizhou provinces before travelling to Beijing. This provided an opportunity to see first-hand the profound developments and modernisation that have taken place in People's China; to learn about the role and work of the Communist Party of China (CPC) over 40 years of reform and opening-up; and to find out the truth about 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics' and the CPC's path to modernisation.

In 1989 there was a political earthquake with the collapse of the Soviet Union and counter-revolutions in Eastern Europe. Economic stagnation, significant problems in commodity production, inefficiency, corruption, opportunism and revisionism were factors ruthlessly exploited by imperialism, which led to an enormous setback for socialism and the working class.

In response, the Communist Party of China led a new #long march# to thwart the potential threat of counter-revolution.

The CPC has overseen deep reforms and opening-up but also overcome complex social difficulties and unexpected events to develop a modern and dynamic socialist country.

Socialist modernisation involved a restructuring, diversification and transfor-

mation of the economy that has led over 853 million people out of poverty, with improvements in living standards, incomes and quality of life for people in both rural and urban areas.

Life expectancy is now 76.7 years, in 1949 it was 36. Medical Insurance is provided to the whole population and 45 per cent of youth from 18–22 go to college. With a population of 1.4 billion this is an astonishing achievement!

Today China is a global power and the second wealthiest country in the world, with a staggering \$5 trillion in bank reserves. In 2021 China's share of global GDP was 18.4 per cent. The trade between China and other countries along the Belt & Road is \$12 trillion, and in advanced digital technologies China is now a world leader.

People's China has successfully responded to one of humanity's worst epidemics and its international response was to provide millions of vaccinations and protective equipment to other countries around the globe. Following the lifting of COVID19 restrictions China's economy is estimated to grow by over an incredible five per cent GDP.

US imperialism has aggressively responded to the perceived 'Chinese threat' by attempting to economically destabilise China's economy by imposing sanctions, increasing hostilities, provocations, geo-political tensions and conflicts, even within China's borders.

China is now a powerful force for diplomacy and peace, however. China's recent peace proposals for Ukraine contained a 12-point peace plan to end hostilities and to resume peace talks. Iran and Saudi Arabia have now agreed to



• Peter Hendy in the driving seat of his hotel lobby!

establish diplomatic relations following a conference hosted by China.

In a report delivered to the 20th National Congress of the CPC, Xi Jinping stated the CPC's desire to build China into a modern socialist country and the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation through a Chinese path of modernisation.

Guangdong Province

Guangzhou (Canton) is the capital of Guangdong province, situated on the North Pearl River Delta near Macau and Hong Kong, known as 'The South Gate' of China. Guangdong is the most populated province in China, with over 127 million people.

Our first impressions of Guangzhou were of an ultra-modern, economically vibrant and rapidly expanding city with multi-lane motorways, wide tree-lined boulevards and soaring skyscrapers. The city was awe inspiring with an incredible skyline and is home to 16 million people. It was smart, clean and architecturally contemporary with an abundance of urban green spaces. There was an absence of pollution, rubbish, poverty and destitution associated with Western cities.

On the outskirts we saw enormous construction projects taking place, providing evidence of China's rapidly expanding economy and to meet new demands for low-cost housing.

Guangzhou is a major transportation and communication hub for South China, having a humid sub-tropical climate with plentiful rainfall. It has a long and illustrious history with a profoundly rich culture of over 2,200 years, being the starting point of the ancient maritime Silk Road. The Opium War and the 1911 Revolution took place here and its museums contain a wealth of cultural relics and artefacts.

Poverty to prosperity

Guangdong was established as a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) and a pioneer of socialist market reforms and the opening-up of coastal areas. It is the epitome of Chinese-style modernisation driven by a scientific and technological revolution. Moving from a predominantly labour-intensive, backward agricultural province to the largest most dynamic and fastest-growing high-tech manufacturing province in China. According to the World Bank it has been trans-

formed from a low-income to high-income economy. Its economic performance is phenomenal, with growth of 0.5 per cent and being a quarter of the national total. In 2021 its economic growth surpassed south Korea! Some 1.32 million jobs were created in 2022 and there are more than 300,000 foreign-invested enterprises in Guangdong. From a closed economy in 1978, its foreign trade imports and exports reached \$1.2 trillion in 2022.

The modernisation of Guangdong province has involved a high level of future planning to develop all aspects of the economic infrastructure involving the constant improvement of roads, highways, ports and harbours linking the province with other cities.

Guangzhou now has an international airport, port and the province is developing high-speed railways and bus links. The city demonstrates the CPC's leadership and commitment to implementing the Belt & Road Initiative in order to develop its international economic infrastructure, to boost trade and stimulate economic growth, not only for China but for other countries across the world.

Research, development and innovation are instrumental to China's economic growth and prosperity. Guangdong is a Science and Technology Hub and is at the forefront of research, being number one nationally for invention patents.

To promote economic stability the CPC is implementing supply-side structural reforms, to increase economic capacity, reduce imbalances and inadequate development, and to raise efficiency. It is promoting new areas of economic growth involving innovation and technology.

Dual Circulation Theory emphasises the need for structural supply-side adjustments and potential problems for China by depending too much on exports for its economic development. This reduces the risk of financial crisis but also acknowledges the enormous potential of a domestic market with over 1.4 billion consumers and opportunities to improve their lives. More emphasis is being placed on safeguarding China's domestic economy consumption by increasing consumption to achieve a balance between exports and imports.

Previously there has been a reliance on exports, but due to global changes and future uncertainties a new paradigm has been developed. This recognises the dual importance of simultaneously developing and expanding the domestic circle or market to achieve strategic goals.

In Guangzhou we visited KingMed Diagnosis, China's leading independent clinical laboratory company providing a technology-oriented medical service company specialising in clinical diagnostics and pathology. The facility was state of the art, but what made it so remarkable was that out of 17,000 employees some 1,063 were CPC members!

We also visited the GAC group, which is ranked 61st in the top Chinese enterprises, building both conventional high-class vehicles and electric cars with a production capacity of 200,000 vehicles using the most advanced robotics technologies.



• China -- once again the workshop of the world...

Guizhou Province

Next, we flew to Guiyang in Guizhou province. A scenic area with a landscape of domed mountains, rivers and waterfalls. Guizhou was previously China's poorest and most under-developed region.

Guizhou has also experienced a dramatic economic surge in high quality scientific, electronic and technological digital transformation. Artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing (online storage that keeps files readily accessible anytime anywhere), block chain (advanced database mechanisms that allow transparent information to be shared in businesses) and other technological developments are unfolding. Guizhou has an advantageous climate, power supply and infrastructure. The cooler climate is conducive to the servers' operation and thus reduces operating costs. Power supplies are from thermal- and water-power and electricity costs are cheaper. Following a three-year highway construction programme all urban areas have access to expressways enabling Guizhou to connect more efficiently with the outside world.

It is China's first national big compre-

hensive pilot zone and part of its national big data strategy. It now has the highest number of mega data centres in the country. The added value to the digital economy is predicted to exceed \$91.7 billion. This will promote the integration of big data into the real economy – industry, agriculture and service industry – and transform, upgrade and improve industrial development and big data industry.

Developments in big data are a central component of the province's social and economic development strategy. Financial support has been provided with special funds for the big data industry. The province has used big data integration to alleviate poverty and to establish the country's first provincial data platform for the online handling of provincial, municipal and county level government services. This has simultaneously involved the successful completion of upgrading optical fibres in 8,900 villages. Guizhou has achieved 100 per cent coverage for fibre-optic broadband and 4G network. Vocational training and college education has included the development of eight universities to set up courses in response to shortages of

talent. Emphasis being placed on deepening relationships between universities and industrial and research institutes.

Ethnicity and Culture

China is a multi-ethnic country of 56 ethnic groups that form a rich part of its political and cultural identity. This diversity is strongly promoted rather than suppressed as is claimed in mass media propaganda. A system of regional autonomy exists for ethnic minorities and equal rights are enshrined in the Constitution.

Guizhou is one of China's most ethnically diverse provinces in China whose people have benefited culturally from the immense economic developments. In Guiyang we attended a magnificent performance involving people of Miao, Dono, Shui and Buyi ethnic minorities wearing traditional, brightly coloured embroidered costumes and jewellery. The production was a musical opera and dance with traditional musical instruments against a backdrop of rivers, mountains, forests and waterfalls.

Culture is considered the soul of the nation and a nation's strength is dependent on its culture. Xi Jinping has stated: "A nation's confidence in its culture is its essential, underlying and enduring strength." China is committed not only to stimulating future cultural innovation and creativity in literature and the arts, but also to protecting and restoring cultural relics, artefacts and historical sites.

A visit was made to Qingyan, a former mil-

itary town of the Ming and Qing dynasties. The streets and alleyways are paved with cobbles and the houses are of stone with traditional Chaomen and Yaomen roof tiles and flower-wood doors that reflect the architectural style of Old China. The place is full of temples, palaces, ancestral halls and pagodas, and is a national cultural heritage site.

We travelled to the Zunyi Conference Site and Memorial Hall, which is a place of great historical revolutionary significance. During the *Zunyi Conference* in 1935, Mao Zedong delivered a lengthy report criticising military errors and serious failures due to "left dogmatism" during the Long March that nearly led to the defeat of the Red Army. Mao was co-elected as a member of the Standing Committee of the Politburo and so entered the military leadership of the Central Committee of the CPC and Red Army. The Zunyi Conference was a significant turning point in the life and death struggle of the CPC and Red Army.

The journey was made via a high-speed bullet train from Guiyang, symbolic of the rapid economic and cultural progress made by People's China since that historical conference. In a province defined by mountains and rivers, the development of a high-speed train network is a feat of engineering ingenuity.

In Beijing we attended the *Third Dialogue on Exchanges and Mutual Learning among Civilisations* and the first *World Conference of Sinologists*, to which Gen-

eral secretary of the CPC Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter. He supported efforts to promote cultural exchanges, understanding, friendship and co-operation between China and the rest of the world. This was held at the China National Archives of Publications and Culture located at the foot of the Yanshan Mountains in Beijing, which holds China's largest collection of publications and database of cultural resources and traditions.

The Communist Party of China

The CPC has a membership of 98 million. It has experienced an arduous journey since its formation, involving great sacrifices. During the period of liberation and from 1949 onwards in the socialist construction of China, the CPC has achieved profound social changes for the Chinese people. After reviewing China's historical experiences and rejecting dogma, it oversaw a strategic shift from class struggle to one of opening up, reform and socialist modernisation.

The Museum of the Communist Party of China, located on Tiananmen Square in Beijing, provides a comprehensive exhibition of the Party's history, 100-year struggles and truly astonishing progress, including magnificent statues, photos and exhibits. A simulator takes you on a virtual, awe-inspiring intrepid journey: Through frozen mountains on the Long March, where you feel snow on your face, before zooming through modern cities across China. Then



• China Railway Highspeed links the nation

plunging to the depths of the oceans, before lifting off into space and landing on Mars!

The *Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China* presented by Xi Jinping is a comprehensive political declaration for the future. The CPC is committed to continually improve people's incomes, material living standards and overall quality of life, but knows that it must also guard against complacency, corruption and ideological degeneration. To maintain its support and the integrity of the people it represents, the CPC must remain dynamic and not stagnate.

Ideological

The CPC acknowledges the potential high risk of an emerging class that may represent an ideological threat to the communist movement. The situation is vigilantly monitored, and laws prohibit capitalists or foreign investors from ownership or control in the Chinese media. We learnt how through Party Schools such as in Guizhou, exemplary working environments provide continuing education for CPC comrades.

In a survey conducted by *China Youth Daily* in 2021 involving young people, 97.7

per cent of respondents believed that the spirit of the CPC is the spirit of the nation. We met with members of the Communist Youth League (CYL), which has 81 million members. The CYL are the next generation, and a priority is developing and strengthening ideological conviction. Political education, training and guidance is provided to forge a revolutionary spirit and socialist values. Educating young people in their historical knowledge of the CPC, Marxism-Leninism and its theoretical developments adapted to Chinese realities.

The CYL has been modernising how it disseminates information using technology, eg social media, and significant attention is paid to ensure that theories and policies are relevant to the present. Work includes frequent face-to-face dialogue with members of the National's People's Congress highlighting issues such as housing problems for young people and the need for low-cost housing.

CYL members carry out voluntary political work and were previously involved in work relating to improving literacy in poor rural areas, abolishing poverty, and during the fight against the COVID19 epidemic.

Governance

In the West the term Governance is loosely associated with corporate mandatory training. It relates to self-law or 'rule of virtue' and the individual. Often a superficial understanding is required before moving on to something else.

Whereas in China the term has a significantly deeper meaning and is associated with a process of continually reviewing, improving, strengthening and modernising the functioning of public institutions. To promote transparency, efficiency and ultimately accountability to the people at all levels. Achieving qualitative changes in political, social and economic organisations and systems.

At a national level this includes the working relationship between the Central Committee of the CPC and the National Congress. Its functioning and the implementation of its policies and procedures relating to key government reform strategies from national security to developing renewable energies. Strengthening China's socialist systems in respect of the rule of law, democracy and the environment. This involves the people in villages, towns, counties, cities and provinces, in both urban and rural locations.

The CPC considers that these systems need to be developed by the people for them to be effective. Thus the modernisation of Governance promotes a sense of social vitality, trust and connection, guaranteeing the welfare of the people. To protect and safeguard their interests and rights ensuring

political stability.

The CPC recognises the importance of grass-roots support for the CPC. The need for leadership to improve local functioning and organisation of the Party. To recognise and respond to problems that arise affecting people's livelihood at local level.

In Guizhou, The Jinyuan Community in Guanshanhu District, Guiyang City, the home of 10,890 people, is a fantastic example of the CPC's dynamic work and implementation of social governance with the people. We met local CPC National Congress Member Yuan Yan in Jinyuan, who explained how people's democracy and social governance works. She demonstrated her enthusiasm, commitment and dedication to representing the people of her community and was eager to show us the vital work being undertaken in an inner city area. The Party used the social media and public information screens to communicate with a predominantly elderly population living in high-rise apartments to identify and quickly resolve problems. Recreational, social and primary healthcare facilities were gold standard. The local CPC involved people in regular con-

sultations and decision making, promoting an evident strong sense of community. The environment was landscaped and a natural habitat created using trees and plants to enhance the area.

The Environment: Shougang Park

Shougang Park in Beijing was a former steel mill that produced 10 million tons of iron and steel, but the former industrial wasteland has been transformed into a hub for tourism, sport and cultural events.

The steel mill was closed in 2005 to reduce air pollution and due to significant changes in the supply of steel. Smokestacks, blast furnaces, cooling towers and other industrial relics are now surrounded by expansive green spaces, sport facilities, modern offices, commercial facilities and apartments. In 2022 it was a venue for the Winter Olympics and provided a dramatic backdrop. Shougang Park is now a monument to urban regeneration and innovation. It's an outstanding illustration of how the CPC is a catalyst for urban rejuvenation promoting a harmony between man and nature. Creating a green ecological and

sustainable environment whilst retaining its magnificent industrial heritage.

New Era Modernisation

Overall we saw the enormous advancement in terms socialist modernisation to meet the ever growing material and cultural needs of 1.4 billion people.

The People's Republic of China is moving into a 'New Era' with astonishing economic, political, social, environmental, scientific, technological and cultural modernisation against a backdrop of imperialism and war. Socialism with Chinese characteristics has shown how socialism is being integrated with the market economy and is not capitalism as critics proclaim. There are inherent dangers, but the CPC is the representative political power of the working class in China and the power of the socialist state belongs to the people.

The CPC's goal is to build a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic and harmonious, but recognises the important contribution it can make to the progress of mankind in promoting diplomacy, international relations and peace.

At the 19th Party Congress in 2017 General Secretary Xi Jinping stated that it takes a good blacksmith to make good steel, demonstrating the Party's resolve, confidence, and unwavering commitment to the future of socialism. Its greatest strength, the leadership of the CPC.



• The communist party school in Guizhou.

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

I write to support Katerina Konecna's letter to the *New Worker* of 7.7.2023 [NW:2213, 7 July 2023]. Katerina tells us how Dr Skala, a Czech communist, has been accused by the Prague City Court of genocide denial in relation to the massacre of Polish POWs at Katyn near Smolensk, during the Second World War, and how he has been sentenced to eight months in prison conditionally suspended for 18 months.

Katerina says that Dr Skala pressed his doubts about the version launched by the Nazi Minister of Propaganda Josef Goebbels, which blamed the Soviet Union for the mass murder. I would like, if I may, to quote the following from Grover Furr's *Blood Lies*: "In *Mein Kampf* Hitler wrote that no one interested in swaying the public should ever tell the truth – only what benefits one's own cause. Those who take the position that the Soviets shot all the Poles tacitly assume that in this one case the Nazis' investigation told the pure truth (except for blaming the Jews). Under any other circumstances to accept a Nazi propaganda report as an honest piece of research would be considered a risky thing to do. But in the case of 'Katyn' it is a leap that anti-communists insist that everyone make. World public opinion has followed them, but only because the arguments against it have been excluded from public consciousness."

**A McKerl
Fife**

Dear Comrades

Cement usage is a fair gauge of a nation's economic activity. It may be regarded as a basic ingredient for the construction of roads, railways, runways, homes, offices, factories, dams and bridges.

People's China produced 4.9 billion tons over

the 2020–2021 two-year period. This was greater than the USA produced in the entire 20th Century. China uses as much cement as the USA does in a full year in just a few days. These statistics are staggering and provide concrete evidence of China's rapid progress.

Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China its workers are building the necessary infrastructure that will enable China to create the material basis for their bold concept of a socialist society. A brave new form of society based upon sustainable development and one in which no-one will be left behind. No matter how many lies are told. No matter how many threats, provocations and sanctions are made, the Chinese people of all ethnic groups are working together to build a powerful force for peace, prosperity and social progress.

The rate of China's progress is well illustrated by the rapid expansion of its railway system, especially the building of a high speed network (HS). Construction and operation of the railways is the responsibility of the China Railway Engineering Corporation, which is a state-owned holding company under the direct supervision of the State Council. China's first HS train only started running in 2008. Since that time the route length has expanded to 40,000 km, becoming the world's greatest network. The entire rail system has a length of some 160,000 km. By providing a safe, fast and efficient transport service for people and goods it has assisted in the spread of economic vitality to all regions and made life more comfortable for everyone. It has also contributed to the success of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) with the construction of rail links to neighbouring countries, including Laos, and direct links to Europe and the Middle East. One of the latest projects includes a crossing of the great Amur river (Heilongjiang) that will cut the travel distance between China and Russia by 800 km. Socialist China can afford to undertake long-term investments that will ensure a secure future.

China's aviation industry is rapidly recovering

from the COVID19 restrictions as demand increases for passengers and freight. Faced with the threat of possible sanctions and restrictions in the supply of aircraft, jet engines and components, the Asian nation is developing its own alternatives.

China's 70–95 seat Comac ARJ21 made its maiden flight in 2008 and currently 105 are in service. The regional aircraft is powered by US General Electric engines and has an order book for 700, with some overseas. A more recent newcomer is the 158–174 seat Comac C919, a narrow-bodied aircraft which first flew in 2017. This plane is again fitted with western-supplied engines, manufactured by Leap. If successful it could provide strong competition for the established Boeing 737 series.

Looking ahead, development is well underway on the Comac C929; a long range 259–320 seat wide-body, twin-jet aircraft. This plane will be fitted with China's own Yangtze River 2000 jet engines.

As the road and rail network has been expanded Chinese engineers have continued with their ambitious bridge and tunnel building programmes. As transport is made easier and remote regions become more accessible, the rural economy is boosted with the establishment of new businesses whilst tourism flourishes. China has over a million bridges and the number has increased by 40 per cent over the last decade.

Infrastructure development has presented major challenges that are being overcome. Deep gorges are crossed by high bridges in the dramatic landscapes of remote valleys, to allow traffic to pass through the clouds from one mountain range to another. China's Danyang Kunshan Grand Bridge is the world's longest, with a length of 165 km. It carries the Beijing–Shanghai high-speed railway over paddy fields, lowlands and Lake Yangchang. The longest sea crossing, which has only recently opened for traffic, is the Hong Kong–Zhuhai–Macau Bridge. Nine years in construction, the 34 km system comprises bridges, tunnels and four artificial islands. Future ambitious

plans include a possible 135 km undersea tunnel between the Chinese mainland and China Taiwan.

China's rapid development depends upon an abundance of electricity. Total installed capacity is currently in excess of 2600 GW, of which 50.9 per cent is from non-fossil fuel sources. China's overall aim is to reach a carbon peak by 2030 and to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. Historically, the country's energy needs have been weighted towards fossil fuels but major efforts are being made to accelerate energy transformation.

Large-scale solar arrays and wind-power installations have been constructed in western regions, which alongside massive hydro-electric projects on the river systems are starting to make a dramatic impact on the energy mix. Clean energy production is increasing as the percentage of coal usage falls. With typical arrogance and ignorance, the corrupt US administration criticises China's energy policy whilst at the same time attempting to restrict the sale of solar panels made in Xinjiang.

In what has been called the Power Silk Road, a new 1.1 million volt DC power-link has been installed. Linking Xinjiang with Anhui province in eastern China, the line brings green electricity to established industrial areas in the east whilst creating wealth in the developing western areas.

President Xi Jinping's bold decision, 10 years ago, to launch the BRI has been a remarkable success. It has served to benefit all parties with increased trade and prosperity, and promoted people-to-people contact. Investments into infrastructure, production facilities and agriculture have enabled China's success to spread beyond its borders for the benefit of all concerned. A new sustainable world order, free from threats, bullying and sanctions by the USA is being built by free people. Working as partners with People's China is in sharp contrast to dealing with a greedy, rapidly declining and increasingly aggressive West that still thinks it rules the world.

**John Maryon
Suffolk**

Diary

EVERY SATURDAY

Committee to Defend Julian Assange: Protests: 12:00–14:00, HMP Belmarsh, Western Way, London SE28 and 16:00–18:00 at 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.

UNTIL 30 DEC

Working Class Movement Library: *That Impudent Little Party: The Independent Labour Party 1893–1975.* Exhibition, Wed–Fri afternoons, WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

SAT 2 SEPT

Korean Friendship Association: 75th Anniversary of the foundation DPRK. Hybrid meeting, 14:00–16:30. Venue details from uk@korea-pr.com or juche007@gmail.com.

SUN 3 SEPT

Burston Strike School rally: Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk.

MON 4 SEPT–FRI 15 SEPT

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Protests at DSEI Arms Fair. London's Royal Docks, London E16.

SAT 9 SEPT

Wigan Diggers Festival: 11:30–9:30, Open-air free festival, The Wiend, Wigan WN1.

SAT 9 SEPT

Korean Friendship Association: 75th anniversary of the foundation of the DPRK. Online Seminar 15:00–17:00. Link on from uk@korea-dpr.com or juche007@gmail.com.

SUN 10 SEPT– WED 13 SEPT

Trades Union Congress: 115th Congress 2023, ACC Liverpool King's Dock, King's Dock Street, Liverpool, L3 4FP.

TUES 12 SEPT–7 NOV

Marx Memorial Library: Marxist Economics for Beginners. Online course. Book on MML website.

THUR 14 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: 50 Years Since the Fascist Coup in Chile. Panel Discussion 19:00. Hybrid meeting. MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU and online.

14 SEPT–14 DEC

Townsend Theatre Productions: *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists.* Neil Gore's one person adaptation. Nationwide tour, see TTP website for venues.

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

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

The annual Edinburgh festivals' season is well underway. The official Edinburgh International Festival brings you the London Symphony Orchestra and similar delights. The Edinburgh Book Festival brings you publishers trying to sell their wares and the Fringe Festival is a law unto itself.

The Fringe is a magnet for pseudos coming to see *Macbeth* being performed in Old Norse in pub cellars off the Royal Mile whilst rich southerners head further north for the grouse shooting.

Sadly the legendary Edinburgh Tory councillor Moira Knox is long gone. In the 1980s and '90s she sternly denounced any Fringe performances offering bare flesh. Producers of such performances went to great efforts to secure her condemnations, which helped boost box-office receipts.

This year two Fringe performers were at war with each other: Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon. For both it was a comedown from high office and frustrated ambition.

Ms Sturgeon said Salmond "has become someone she doesn't want to have in her life" whilst he made the point that she is a "sad, almost reduced figure" from whom "a period of silence might be a good policy". The words pot and kettle come to mind...

Beyond the Fringe

At least for Salmond and Ms Sturgeon the concept of a 'one-man show' did not refer to the size of the audience, as has happened in one case. The festivals are extremely good business for Edinburgh, anyone with a spare broom cupboard to let can do so at astronomical rents to either visitors or performers.

The Festival Fringe, however, has often been denounced as a cesspit of exploitation. Trendy comedians who have updated old anti-Thatcher jokes with Sunak ones

are often the worst for not paying those who dole out leaflets to visitors, collect the money and make sure the microphones are working. There is no shortage of people queuing up for such jobs as all too many people fondly imagine they are a pathway to fame and fortune. The actors' union Equity has set up shop in the city for the duration. They are clearly needed.

One of the main Fringe festivals is the Pleasance, an Edinburgh University building given over to small shows which has come under fire for its hiring practices for "volunteers" – as they are called to get round employment laws.

Pleasance insists that its "volunteers" work fixed hours for fixed fees, which is in breach of HM Revenue and Customs guidelines for genuine volunteers who get expenses. That is a cheap and easy way of getting round the law.

Equally, the laws on rest days are breached. Other venues advertised technical and lighting jobs for set fees, but worse, with only two days off during the entire month. Again, this is in clear breach of HMRC rules, which demand one full day off per week. Many other jobs are advertised without stating the hours, which are bound to exceed the legal maximum of 48 hours per week. As these jobs only pay a £500 fixed fee, minimum wage laws are in abeyance for Fringe.

Many of the volunteers have to work for very long hours, even after the applause or boos have died away. Extra work can involve physically demanding and dangerous jobs such as dismantling scenery without training or essential safety equipment such as steel toe-capped boots. As a result the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary is kept busy.

A few years ago a Fair Fringe campaign emerged to deal with these issues, but it has not survived the COVID-19 pandemic. A useful report was published – but the main effect was to drive dodgy practices further underground. Allegedly the Unite Hospitality Branch took over the Fair Fringe's campaign, but there is no sign of activity this year and the official Fringe Society does not seem to worry about such vulgar matters.

Unite drew up a "Fair Hospitality Charter" that demanded the 'real living

wage', rest breaks, equal pay for young workers, minimum-hour contracts, anti-sexual harassment policy, paid transport after midnight, 100 per cent of tips to staff, and trade union access. This seems to be a dead letter. Even the Fringe Society's own report last year showed that a third of all the 2,000 paid workers earned less than a living wage.

Last year Kirsty Haigh of the Fair Fringe campaign said removing a worse than usual organiser was a rare victory, but "There's still a long way to go until we have a Fringe not built on the backs of exploitation". She also said: "The Fringe Society is still shying away from the real problems – it needs to be demanding much more and using its position to force Fringe employers to clean up their acts."

Talking about unions...

...workers at a Scottish munitions plant that supplies missiles to Ukraine are going on a two-week strike over wages and bonuses.

Some 50 workers who handle and load missiles at the Defence Equipment & Support plant in the town of Beith in north Ayrshire have been short-changed in a pay and bonuses deal given by the rocket-assembly plant, which widens the gap between "skilled" and "unskilled" workers. The strike, called by the GMB, is backed by 93 per cent of their membership at the 1,000 acre complex that employs over 400 civilian

workers.

Louise Gilmour, the secretary of the GMB in Scotland, said its members, who carry out "non-craft" roles at the plant, are now being paid up to £18,000 less each year than other "skilled employees" after the plant's management significantly increased their wages to prevent the drain of the personnel by private defence companies.

"A two-tier culture has been allowed to embed itself in this workplace and risks good working relationships now and in the future," Gilmour told the media.

"Everyone brings different skills to their work and that should be recognised, but the role of our members is fundamental to the effective operation of this important site. They are only asking for fairness, and the support they have received from Scotland to Ukraine shows why they deserve it."

A Ministry of Defence (MoD) spokesperson says the strikes at the plant, which assembles the Storm Shadow and Brimstone missiles being supplied to Ukraine by the ministry, would not affect the delivery of weapons.

"These strikes will have no effect on our ability to provide capability to Ukraine. Pre-planned contingency measures are being implemented at DM Beith to ensure the continued safe and compliant operation of the site," a spokesperson said, adding the ministry remains "open to dialogue with GMB to discuss the issues raised and work towards resolving them".

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The East is Red!

by J Sykes

The East is Still Red: Chinese Socialism in the 21st Century by Carlos Martinez, 2003: Praxis Press, Glasgow. Paperback: 238pp, RRP £17.

The book begins by acknowledging that there is a great deal of ignorance and confusion, especially in the imperialist countries, about People's China. Martinez writes: "Even among socialists and communists, there are misconceptions and important gaps in understanding." He addresses these issues head on.

The first chapter focuses on the continuities of the revolution in China, from the founding of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1921 until today. Martinez gives an overview of the history of the Chinese revolution and defends that legacy of Mao Zedong, whilst giving a balanced account of Mao's more controversial initiatives, such as the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

For example, while acknowledging that the turmoil and disruption of the Cultural Revolution significantly impeded China's development, he also points out that it "had a more directly useful outcome" in terms of preventing the "ideological decay that was taking place in the Soviet Union". Martinez says it "set the parameters of how far Reform and Opening Up could go" and "laid the groundwork for Deng Xiaoping's Four Cardinal Principles, which the CPC continues to observe today: 1) We must keep to the socialist road; 2) We must uphold the people's democratic dictatorship; 3) We must uphold the leadership of the Communist Party; 4) We must uphold Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought."

Furthermore, he explains that the movement

to send young intellectuals down to the countryside during the Cultural Revolution "was a crucial factor in the development of a new generation of young intellectuals with a close understanding of the needs of the peasantry and the situation in the countryside". It is noteworthy that Chinese President Xi Jinping was himself sent to the countryside as part of this movement.

Looking at the post-1978 Reform and Opening Up period initiated by Deng Xiaoping, Martinez recognises that many see this period as "a turning point in the wrong direction" but argues against this view. Instead, Martinez notes: "Deng Xiaoping's strong belief was that, unless the government delivered on a significant improvement in people's standard of living, the entire socialist project would lose its legitimacy and therefore be in peril."

This is a point that Martinez returns to later, arguing that the combination of economic stagnation and ideological decay in the Soviet Union led to the collapse of socialism in the USSR.

This point should be made clearer. Indeed, whilst the material basis of Soviet revisionism was rooted in the economic reforms of the Khrushchev period, which emphasised market reforms, profitability, material incentives and so on, a deciding factor was the question of the class struggle in the superstructure and the abandonment of Marxism-Leninism by the Soviet leadership. Contrast China's Four Cardinal Principles with Khrushchev's revisionist theses of the "state of the whole people" and "party of the whole people", negating the class character of the USSR and Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and it is easy to see the gulf that stands between the two

approaches.

Martinez rightly notes that the CPC's reform period took a "grass-roots" approach that was "patient, incremental, and results-oriented", whereas the Gorbachev "reforms" that brought about the final restoration of capitalism in the USSR in 1991 were undemocratically imposed on the Soviet people, rather than leveraging the creativity of the Soviet masses.

Martinez explains that: "Although China's reform process served to introduce market forces into the economy, the whole process was carried out under the tight control of the government and took place within the context of a planned economy." Indeed, the commanding heights of the Chinese economy remain state owned, with state-owned enterprises making up 60 per cent of the economy; and most of the value created by the working class in China is socially distributed, going towards the betterment of society. And whereas the revisionists in the Soviet Union attacked the history of the USSR and spent 30 years dismantling the rule of the proletariat and its party, the opposite has taken place in China, where the CPC maintains its central, leading role, based on the scientific application of Marxism to Chinese conditions. In fact, when rightists in the CPC led by Zhao Ziyang tried to restore capitalism in 1989, the CPC stood firm in its commitment to the socialist road.

A highlight of the book is a careful and thorough analysis of China's long war against poverty. China has eradicated extreme poverty. What does this mean?

"At the start of the targeted poverty alleviation programme in 2014," Martinez writes, "just under 100 million people were

identified as living below the poverty line; seven years later, the number was zero". The Chinese government defines extreme poverty alleviation in terms of what it calls the "two assurances and three guarantees". As Martinez explains: "The two assurances are for adequate food and clothing; the three guarantees are for access to medical services, safe housing with drinking water and electricity, and at least nine years of free education." He contrasts this to the advanced capitalist countries, where nothing is promised, where profit is more important than people, and where poverty and inequality are on the rise.

Likewise, the book highlights China's commitment to ecological development. Martinez writes that: "Over the last decade in particular, China has emerged as the undisputed leader in the fight against climate breakdown, and the results of this leadership are reverberating globally."

Against the charge from some, even on the Left, that China is imperialist, Martinez argues that "imperialism doesn't look like this". He explains the Leninist theory of imperialism as monopoly capitalism. According to Lenin, imperialism is based on the concentration of capital into monopolies, whereby the economy becomes dominated by a "financial oligarchy". The export of

capital takes centre stage, and monopolist capitalist associations share the world among themselves, leading to the total division of the world amongst the imperialist powers. The October Revolution in 1917 ruptured this imperialist chain, and the other socialist countries, including China, followed suit.

Against the claim that China is imperialist, *The East is Still Red* emphasises that China's role in the developing world is qualitatively different from that of the imperialist countries. It acknowledges that imperialism has the function of locking in underdevelopment, whereas China's role encourages development whilst respecting sovereignty. The book discusses this issue in terms of China's role in "building a multipolar world". The concept of 'multipolarity' doesn't really get to the heart of the issue, however, as Martinez himself acknowledges by saying that "the multipolar narrative doesn't make explicit reference to anti-imperialism".

Indeed, it would be clearer to understand the place of China in relation to the four fundamental contradictions operating on a world scale: the contradiction between the working class and the capitalists, the contradiction between the imperialist powers, the contradiction between the imperialists and the oppressed nations,

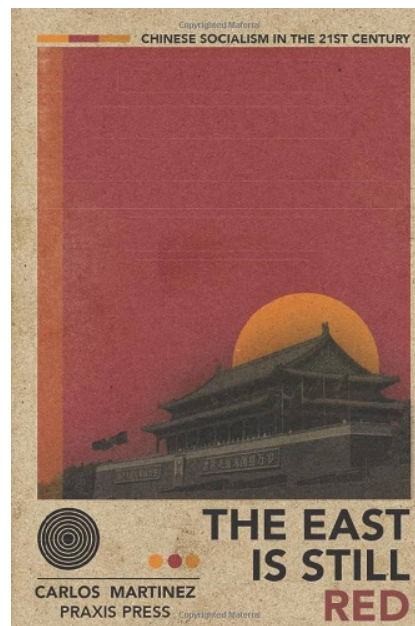
and the contradiction between the imperialists and the socialist countries. Of these, the contradiction between the imperialists and the oppressed nations is primary, meaning it is the contradiction that is driving things on a world scale. What China is doing is providing aid to the countries of the developing world that allows them to avoid the liberalisation, privatisation, domination and plunder that are central to the neo-colonialist approach of the imperialist countries. Although this development isn't sufficient to bring socialism to those countries, it does serve to further weaken imperialism.

Importantly, Martinez also discusses the growing drive for war against China from the imperialist powers, especially the USA. He explains how the USA attempts to manufacture consent for aggression against China and answers the propaganda with facts. Against the 'Third Camp' Trotskyites who say "Neither a Washington nor Beijing", Martinez is clear that they are, in fact, playing right into the hands of the imperialists.

The bulk of Chapter Five is devoted to debunking the imperialist accusations that China is committing human rights abuses against the Uyghur people in Xinjiang. The book refutes the lie that the Chinese government is committing "cultural genocide" and is operating "concentration camps". Similarly, it exposes the role of the USA in attempting to destabilise Xinjiang.

The book ends with a call to "unite to oppose the US-led New Cold War on China" and says that: "All those that oppose imperialism must resolutely and consistently oppose the US-led New Cold War in all its manifold forms." This is certainly true, and this book makes a great contribution towards that effort.

Fightback News (USA)



Fidel Castro, a tireless fighter for a better world

by María Josefina Arce

Fidel Castro will always be an indispensable man and leader. A tireless fighter, of vast knowledge and clear political vision. Throughout his life he raised his voice in favour of the poor, of peace for all and of the urgency and need to build a better world.

His words on every international platform made history. His first speech at the UN, in September 1960, was shocking – that young man, who would have been 97-years-old on 13th August, shocked those present in New York.

The leader of the Cuban revolution said “Yes, we are going to speak clearly”, and then denounced the constant attacks by the USA against the nascent revolution, which would lead to profound transformations for the benefit of all the people.

Fidel Castro went further, however. He called for an end to colonies and the exploitation of countries by monopolies and then, he stressed, humanity will have reached a true stage of progress.

That philosophy, which he described as one of dispossession, he would refer to on numerous occasions, when,



with irrefutable truths, he advocated a fairer international economic order.

With that thought and action in favour of the humblest, he impregnated the Cuban revolution,

which has in its essence the solidarity aid to other peoples. Under the guidance of Fidel Castro, health and education reached remote places of the world geography.

He always taught us

to share what we had, to bring hope and life to those who in other nations did not have access to essential human rights.

At the Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992, the historic leader of the Cuban revolution warned that the prevailing inequality in an increasingly consumerist world was leading to the destruction of the environment.

Three decades earlier, he already clearly saw the need and urgency of protecting the environment. He was clear and direct when he stressed that a biological species, mankind, was at risk of disappearing due to the rapid and progressive

liquidation of its natural living conditions. He was a visionary. Today the world is facing an environmental crisis.

As he warned in Rio de Janeiro, forests are disappearing, rivers and seas are polluted and emissions of gases into the atmosphere continue, leading to a global climate change.

Fidel Castro left an indelible mark on people all over the world and especially on the Cuban people, with whom he fought countless battles, tirelessly and always with intelligence and determination.

Radio Havana Cuba

Vladimir Podgorbunsky: a hero to remember

by Oleg Loginov

The trials and tribulations that befall people during war can change their lives forever. War brings tragedies and tears, but it can also be a turning point, inspiring courage and heroism. A striking example of such a transformation is the amazing story of Vladimir Podgorbunsky, a former criminal from Chita.

Born in the Irkutsk region in 1916, Vladimir Podgorbunsky lost his father shortly after birth, and then tragically lost his mother, leaving him in the care of an orphanage. To survive, he became a thief and quickly became a leader amongst the inmates of the orphanage. He was sent to a juvenile colony at the age of 18, from where he repeatedly escaped, continuing to lead

a life of crime.

During one of the escapes, Podgorbunsky met with a tank colonel, who became his mentor and protector. Under the influence of the colonel, Vladimir decided to change his life and wrote a letter to Mikhail Kalinin, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, in which he expressed his desire to join the army. The letter was delivered, giving Podgorbunsky a chance for redemption.

Soon Vladimir was released early from the colony and entered the service in the tank unit as a driver. Fate decreed otherwise, however, and during the war he ended up in the infantry. In 1942, Vladimir showed courage by destroying an enemy tank and killing several German soldiers. For his heroism, he was awarded the medal “For

Courage” and, despite the turbulent past, was accepted into the ranks of the Communist Party [CPSU(b)]. Over time, Podgorbunsky became an experienced commander of a reconnaissance detachment and made a great impression on others.

A turning point in the war

The summer of 1943 was a turning point in the course of the Second World War. During the Battle of Kursk, Podgorbunsky received a responsible task – to capture an enemy officer. Using his military ingenuity and experience, he secretly crept up to the enemy’s bunker, neutralised two German soldiers, and captured the third who was taken back for interrogation. Later, in the same year, during the liberation of

the city of Kozyatyn in the Vinnytsia region, he once again demonstrated his military skills.

Kozyatyn is a small settlement that served as the most important transport artery for supplying the entire German Army Group South. Leading a group of Red Army soldiers, Podgorbunsky with two tanks and a handful of machine guns approached the German invaders. Using the surprise factor, the scouts destroyed the enemy’s defences, which consisted of artillery pieces and two companies of infantry. For courage and conducting an attack with minimal losses, Podgorbunsky was awarded the prestigious title of ‘Hero of the Soviet Union’.

Podgorbunsky’s feats were not, however, limited to these battles. In the memoirs of General Katukov, several more episodes are described,

in which Podgorbunsky’s unit participated.

Sadly he did not live to see Victory Day. On 19th August 1944, during the Lvov-Sandomierz

offensive operation, Vladimir Podgorbunsky fell, steadfastly holding the captured bridgehead.

Pravda.ru



• Vladimir Podgorbunsky.

Troops accused of atrocities in Kenya

by Ian DeMartino

The government of Kenya has launched an inquiry into British soldiers stationed in the East African country, marking the first such inquiry into UK troops by the former colony since independence. Kenya's parliamentary defence committee is leading the inquiry into allegations of murder, sexual abuse and environmental destruction by the British Army Training Unit Kenya (Batuk).

The British first colonised the land now known as Kenya in the late 1800s and held onto the territory until 1963, when it gained its independence. The

agreement allowed British soldiers to continue training in the country twice a year.

Kenyan lawyer Kelvin Kubai, who is representing residents suing Batuk over alleged environmental abuses, noted that Kenyans have no "clear cut channel through which victims of British army abuse can seek redress".

The inquiry is part of a larger pushback against the Kenya-UK defence treaty, which was renewed in 2021 but not implemented until April of this year because of concerns raised by residents and local politicians near the base.

The unit's base resides in Nanyuki, about 125 miles north of Ken-

ya's capital Nairobi.

Amongst the most significant abuses believed to be committed by British troops is the murder of Agnes Wanjiru, a 21-year-old mother whose body was found stabbed and stuffed into a septic tank.

A 2019 UK inquiry found that British soldiers were responsible for the murder and in 2021 an alleged confession to the murder by a British soldier was published in media outlets, but no-one has been charged in the crime.

In the latest version of the Kenya-UK defence treaty, murder was not included in the list of crimes that Kenyan authorities could prosecute British soldiers for.

Kenyan and the UK authorities have been accused of taking a lackadaisical approach to the case and the British army has been accused of attempting a cover-up.

Accusations of sexual assault by British soldiers have long been a feature of the UK's presence in Kenya.

In 2003, more than 600 women from the Masai and Samburu tribes marched to the British High Commission, demanding that the British government pay for the education of their mixed-race children that were the result of rapes by British soldiers.

Nelson Koech, the chair of the defence committee leading the inquiry, said that if significant

abuses in violation of the treaty are found it may allow Kenya to back out of the 2021 defence treaty.

"If we realise that there's been a lot of activity that spits in the face of [the treaty], it gives us room to re-look at the agreement, and even to exit," Koech said.

There have also been claims that the army has left unexploded bombs on grounds accessible by the public and uses chemicals during military drills that risk lives, a claim the British army has denied.

"The British army use white phosphorus illuminant rounds on training exercises in

the UK and overseas, they are never used as a weapon. They are not considered to be hazardous to health and safety, provided that the existing safety precautions are followed. In Kenya, the British army only fires white phosphorus on Archer's Post training area, which is a Kenyan Ministry of Defence gazetted training area and not communal land," an Army spokesman said.

But Koech said the issues being brought up can no longer be ignored by the Kenyan government. "If Batuk, like it's claimed, has been committing injustices then we don't want any form of neocolonialism. As a country we will say no."

Sputnik

UK Orchestrated ICC Arrest Order Against Putin

by Ilya Tsukanov

The British authorities' fingerprints are all over the ICC's decision to issue arrest warrants against Russian President Vladimir Putin and Presidential Commissioner for Children's Rights Maria Lvova-Belova, and the details of the story play out like a cheap mystery novel, says a Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman.

The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants against Russia's president and commissioner for children's rights in March, charging them with the purported "unlawful transfer" of children out of the Ukraine conflict zone. The Kremlin dismissed the charges and Russia's Investigative Committee opened a criminal case against ICC judges.

"On 21 February 2023, ICC Judge Antoine Kesia-Mbe Mindua from the Democratic Republic of the Congo was replaced in the ICC's Pre-Trial

Chamber by Costa Rican (and Oxford graduate) Sergio Gerardo Ugalde Godinez, who was eager to serve the West. After this occurred, the British lobby gained the upper hand in the chamber. But a personal factor was needed – absolute control over the decisions of the ICC by the British," Zakharova said.

According to the spokeswoman, in an interesting "coincidence", the same day "the brother of ICC prosecutor Karim Khan, former member of British parliament Imran Ahmad Khan", who had been convicted of sexually assaulting a minor and imprisoned in 2022 and sentenced to 18 months in jail, "was released from an English prison ahead of schedule, serving only half his term".

"The next step was logical and predictable. On 22 February, literally the next day, prosecutor Khan's appeal [on Putin and Lvova-Belova's arrest warrants] was sent to the Pre-Trial Chamber with a request for approval. One cannot help but get the impres-

sion that Karim Khan himself did not believe London and was waiting for confirmation of the promised release of his paedophile brother from prison," Zakharova wrote. But the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber hesitated and nothing happened.

"Then," the spokeswoman noted, "London organised a donor conference for the ICC and set a date – 20 March, transparently hinting to the Hague that if it wants to see British financial contributions, results will be necessary. Judges are easy to buy.

On 17 March, four days after the announcement of the donor conference and three days before it was held," the ICC issued its warrants against Putin and Lvova-Belova.

Characterising the chain of events as a mystery ripped straight out of an Agatha Christie novel, only written by a far less talented beginner writer, Zakharova suggested that the ICC's decisions on the Russian president's arrest constitute what can only be described as a "cheap script made using British money. Except now the ICC themselves are on a criminal wanted list,"

she said.

The ICC issued "warrants of arrest" against Putin and Lvova-Belova on 17 March, accusing them of "the crime of unlawful deportation of population (children) and that of unlawful transfer of population (children) from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation" from "at least" February 2022 onwards.

Moscow dismissed the "absurd" charges, stressing that Russia is not a party to the court's statute, "and bears no obligations under it".

Russian officials and MPs went on to liken the court's "warrants" to toilet paper and suggested that the ICC judges were the ones who should be arrested.

Regarding the "deportation" charges themselves, Russia has made no secret of its efforts to evacuate civilians, including children, from front-line areas threatened by Ukrainian shelling and drone attacks, and accused Washington and its allies of turning a blind eye to the deaths and injury of over 400 children by Ukrainian forces, including using HIMARS rockets and other NATO calibre weapons.

Independent media investigations have further revealed that the "deported" minors were often sent from Donetsk and Lugansk to areas deeper inside Russia by their own parents to reduce the danger of their children being killed by Ukrainian shelling or by ultra-nationalist enforcers targeting "Russian collaborators".



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