

Regime change in Ukraine – will Zelensky go?

by our Eastern European
Affairs correspondent

Fierce fighting continues all along the front as Ukrainian troops continue their futile efforts to smash through the Russian lines that run from the Donbas to the Black Sea. Russian missiles continue to pound Kiev and other military targets throughout Ukraine whilst the Ukrainians continue their own, largely ineffectual, drone attacks on Russian territory, including Moscow.

The Americans are preparing to send another massive tranche of weapons to the Zelensky regime. Evgeny Prigozhin, the head of the Wagner Company who died in a plane crash last week, was buried at a private funeral ceremony in St Petersburg on Tuesday, and Vladimir Putin is preparing for a visit to People's China for the Belt & Road Forum in October. And a former employee at the old US consulate in Siberia has been accused of spying for the Americans.

Robert Shonov, who worked for the US Consulate General in Vladivostok, has been charged with espionage. Shonov, who was arrested in May, faces up to eight years in jail if convicted of co-operating "on a confidential basis with a foreign state". Shonov,

a Russian citizen, worked at the now-closed US consulate in Vladivostok for more than 25 years. He's accused of supplying information to the Americans for "material reward" on how Russia's war effort was affecting public opinion in the run-up to the Russian presidential election next year.

The Americans say the charges are "wholly without merit". "Russia's targeting of Mr Shonov under the 'confidential co-operation' statute only highlights the increasingly repressive actions the Russian government is taking against its own citizens," says Matthew Miller, a US State Department spokesperson. He said that Shonov provided services to the US Embassy in Moscow "in strict compliance with Russia's laws and regulations".

"We strongly protest the Russian security services' attempts – furthered by Russia's state-controlled media – to

intimidate and harass our employees," Miller said.

"Shonov's sole role at the time of his arrest was to compile press summaries from publicly-available Russian media sources."

In Ukraine the country is under martial law. Opposition parties have been banned and their leaders jailed or forced into hiding and all elections suspended. But some American politicians say their puppet needs to restore his regime's international standing by seeking a new presidential mandate. Vladimir Zelensky has responded saying that a presidential election could, indeed, be held next year. But only if the Western powers shared the cost. Whether Zelensky will still be around to stand is another matter. Former CIA analyst Larry Johnson thinks not.

"Zelensky very well could be ousted in a coup within the next three to four weeks, because of the great disgruntlement among troops on the eastern front," Johnson told *Redacted News* host Clayton Morris in a podcast last weekend. Johnson said that the way the conflict is going, Ukraine's

survival as a country was "in great doubt". Kiev is already entirely dependent on the West, and its needs will only grow whilst its capabilities will continue to shrink, Johnson said.

Johnson believes the US plan was to trap Russia in an unwinnable war and induce regime change in Moscow. Instead, "that's going to happen to Ukraine" and Washington will have to figure out how to "back away" from the conflict, because it has massively underestimated Russia's economic and military strength.

A few weeks ago another former US intelligence officer, Scott Ritter, said more or less the same thing on the George Galloway show on YouTube. Ritter said the likelihood of a military coup was growing with each destroyed Ukrainian brigade. "We could be reaching a Kerensky 1917 moment, where the military just says 'We're done'," Ritter said.



FUND

This week's post brought in £407. The fighting fund for August now stands at £2,867. This means we need to raise £633 over the weekend to hit our £3,500 New Worker fund target.

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INSIDE

ULEZ .. P2

EMERGENCY WORKERS..P3

NIGER .. P6

TRUMP: INMATE NO
P01135809 .. 12

THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Walk on by...

None of us are going to miss Nadine Dorries, who formally resigned as an MP this week – almost 12 weeks after she said she was stepping down with “immediate effect”.

Her resignation letter – a rant against her leader, Rishi Sunak, whom she clearly despises – no doubt sets the scene for the launch of her forthcoming book on the downfall of her idol, Boris Johnson.

In politics Johnson liked to be surrounded by people lesser than himself. Rishi Sunak and Dominic Cummings were notable exceptions. Nadine Dorries was not.

Few, apart from herself, can recall her achievements as an MP and later a Cabinet minister in the Johnson government. If she’s remembered for anything at all it will be for the string of novels she’s written over the years or the time she lost the Tory whip for taking part in the TV reality show *I’m a Celebrity...Get Me Out of Here!* In 2012.

Many will be glad to see the back of her – and not just in the House of Commons. Adam Zerny, the Independent leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, says his constituents won’t be shedding any tears over her departure from the political scene.

“There’s a great degree of relief amongst the many people who are constituents that finally this may be over and we may soon find that we have an MP that actually cares about the local community,” Zerny said. “She’s rarely ever been seen in the area. And I think we’ve had very much the impression that what she cares about is her own life and her life at Westminster rather than Mid Beds.”

With exquisite timing, Ms Dorries has ensured that the by-election in her Mid-Bedfordshire constituency will fall soon after the publication of her book *The Plot: The Political Assassination of Boris Johnson* and the Tories’ annual conference in October.

And Sunak may rue the day he denied her a peerage if her safe Tory seat falls to Labour or the Liberal Democrats – and both have high hopes given the slump in Tory fortunes.

The fact that the Tories are openly fighting amongst themselves shows how deep the divisions are between the Remainers and Brexiteers. Back in the halcyon days of the 1960s and 70s Tories of all hues closed ranks to stop Labour returning to high office. These days they clearly think they’ve nothing to fear from Sir Keir Starmer and his Blairite chums.

The latest opinion poll puts Labour 25 points ahead of the Conservatives and suggest that Labour has the support of 50 per cent of the electorate, and at the moment Labour seems to be heading for a landslide at the next general election.

Ms Dorries says in her resignation letter that: “It is a fact that there is no affection for Keir Starmer out on the doorstep. He does not have the winning X factor qualities of a Thatcher, a Blair, or a Boris Johnson, and sadly, prime minister, neither do you. Your actions have left some 200 or more of my MP colleagues to face an electoral tsunami and the loss of their livelihoods, because in your impatience to become prime minister you put your personal ambition above the stability of the country and our economy.”

She may not be right about Sunak but she’s spot on about Starmer.

ULEZ row simmers on in London

by Svetlana Ekimenko

London’s Ultra-Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) expanded on 29th August, heating up the controversy around the decision that critics slam as fraught with financial burdens on people amidst a cost-of-living crisis. The zone will almost double in size to include all Greater London’s 32 boroughs. The vast area the scheme managed by Transport for London (TfL) will encompass millions of people living within it.

Earlier in the year, a coalition of Tory councils opposing the expansion of ULEZ to cover all of the capital challenged the policy in court. But in July the High Court ruled the expansion lawful.

Ever since the ULEZ policy was originally drawn up under the then Tory mayor, Boris Johnson, and introduced in 2019 to tackle toxic air in the capital’s central congestion zone, its proponents have vouched that there would be cleaner air throughout London as a result. Critics have been up in arms, however, denouncing its toll on residents and businesses.

London’s Ultra Low Emissions Zone (ULEZ), introduced in April 2019, was conceived to improve air quality in central London by targeting older, more polluting vehicles, such as cars, motorbikes and vans driving through, by slapping them with a charge. The zone has since expanded, covering inner London in 2021. Anyone driving a non-compliant vehicle in the zone is expected to pay £12.50 per day. ULEZ operates 24/7, 364 days a year (except Christmas Day).

As a rule, the ULEZ charge applies to petrol cars sold prior to 2005 and failing to meet Euro 4 emission standards, along with diesels built prior to 2015 and, accordingly, not meeting Euro 6 regulations. Ahead of the ULEZ expansion, those working on the policy with the Greater London Authority have insisted that “nine in 10 cars and eight in 10 vans” already meet the ULEZ standards.

In an unpleasant twist, drivers

already faced with the ULEZ charge have recently fallen victim to unofficial copycat websites. As a result, targeted people were stung with extra charges above the £12.50 daily fee even before the expansion went into effect. Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, confirmed that Transport for London (TfL) was not associated with any third-party websites accepting payments.

More than £400 million has been generated in England in fees and penalties from vehicle emission schemes since March 2021, revealed research obtained by carmaker Peugeot through a Freedom of information (FoI) request. A vast majority was made when the ULEZ zone began to cover area inside the North and South Circular roads in London.

Regarding the studies into the effects of such a zone, the results have been somewhat of mixed bag. ULEZ slashed NO₂ (nitrogen dioxide) levels close to the roadside by an estimated 46 per cent in central London and by 21 per cent in inner London by October 2022, claimed a City Hall report reviewed by Imperial College London. At a further distance from roadsides however, the effect is believed to be much smaller. Another study, in 2021, found that when ULEZ covered only central London, the NO₂ levels were reduced by under three per cent, as averaged across the capital. The same research said that PM2.5 (fine particulate matter) changes were insignificant.

Expansion of ULEZ would bring down emissions of nitrogen oxides from transport by 6.9 per cent in outer London, with the levels of fine particulate matter affected to a much lesser degree, fresh modelling commissioned by TfL suggested. Overall, a reduction of NO₂ levels in outer London is projected by an average of no more than 1.5 per cent. Accordingly, despite ULEZ, air quality would still fall short of WHO standards.

Opponents of the expansion of ULEZ to all of the capital – a coalition of London councils – challenged the policy in court, decrying the damage it would

inflict. In July 2023, the High Court ruled against the challenge. Councillors called on London’s Labour leader, the Mayor Sadiq Khan, to rethink the move as declining living standards, the combination of soaring inflation and increased costs of essential goods and services, has placed a significant financial burden on households. Fallout from introduced sanctions against Russia last year has also taken its severe toll, particularly impacting energy prices.

“Even the Mayor’s own supporters are now saying that it is the wrong time to be expanding this scheme. Many thousands of low-income earners, vulnerable people ordinary workers and small businesses who are the beating heart of our borough will have to shoulder further costs which they cannot afford. It will cause even greater financial hardship and for some it will cause the loss of business or employment,” said Conservative councillor Ian Edwards, Leader of Hillingdon Council.

Another Tory, Baroness O’Neill of Bexley, the Leader of the London Borough of Bexley, also voiced disappointment with the legal outcome. “They have told us time and time again how worried they were about ULEZ. I’m sure that jobs and businesses will also feel the effect as less out of borough residents will want to come to work or shop in Bexley because of this new charge. I know from speaking to carers who have to travel in and out of the borough to visit family members on a regular basis that they will be one of the groups who will suffer most.”

Incidentally, Sadiq Khan was forced to defend his decision to expand the tax on polluting vehicles as Sir Keir Starmer slammed him for the disappointing by-election result in Uxbridge and South Ruislip earlier in the year. Steve Tuckwell, who had been campaigning against ULEZ, managed to hold the outer London constituency for the Conservatives.

Sputnik

Workers' Notes

Emergency Workers Special

This week we largely focus on issues facing those workers who are normally contacted by dialling 999. Firstly we look at the fire service, which is where most of the present action is...

The Voice of Fire Fighters

by New Worker correspondent

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has been much in the news recently for its actions over the floating barge, the Bibby Stockholm. Built in 1976, it was used to accommodate homeless people and asylum seekers in Hamburg and Rotterdam in the 1990s and early 2000s. More recently it has been used to house construction workers on large-scale coastal projects and is presently based at Portland Port in Dorset to house asylum seekers as a cost-saving measure. This has been widely opposed by the local authority and many charities who say the accommodation is unsuitable for families with children. The first few inmates were evacuated after the discovery of *Legionella* bacteria.

The FBU have legally challenged this on fire safety grounds because it has been altered to take more than double the numbers it was originally designed for. A local authority whistle-blower said checks in July showed the barge had the potential to become a "floating Grenfell".

Matt Wrack, FBU's general secretary, says: "It is disgraceful that the Home Secretary is not even willing to meet us to discuss these concerns."

"Fires do not discriminate based on immigration status, and neither can fire safety regulations. Everyone, no matter where they are from, has the right to live in safe and decent accommodation, and firefighters have the right to expect that they will not be recklessly endangered."

On Merseyside, FBU members have voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action and action short of a strike in opposition to plans by the local fire authority to reduce night-time staffing numbers from an agreed level of six to five, and the requirement for some members to work an imposed duty shift system. This would apply to new firefighters and would breach nationally agreed terms and conditions in relation to overtime rates of pay. The FBU will announce strike dates if management do not enter serious talks very soon.

Ian Hibbert, the union's Merseyside brigade secretary, warned that: "Merseyside fire control staff and firefighters smashed through ballot thresholds this week, delivering a huge mandate for industrial action. ... During this dispute, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service has continued to refuse to abide by locally and nationally agreed negotiation procedures. We are here, waiting to negotiate in good faith. Our employers have until the 12 September to meet us and avoid strikes."

In Scotland, the SNP Government plans to cut £36 million from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service over the next four years. This was the subject of a recent demonstration in Glasgow's George Square attended not just by off duty firefighters, but by posties, local government and health workers, all of whom have, or have had, disputes of their own.

Ironically, one of those addressing the rally and pledging support for the FBU was a Green MSP representing the very same government imposing the cuts. An unimpressed observer noted that: "Maggie Chapman and her party colleague members rocked up to a Scottish Fire and Rescue Service budget cut protest in George Square, tweeting they oppose the cuts etc, this is despite them being in government under the Bute House agreement."

FBU Scotland executive council member Colin Brown told the rally: "Modernisation doesn't come cheap, and it doesn't come with £36 million of cuts over four years."

"There have been 1,100 jobs cut already, there's been three control rooms shut already, and now we face the loss of another 200 jobs."



The union has warned the Scottish Government that they will face strike action.

Another battle the FBU is presently fighting is the more specific one of opposing "dangerous and irresponsible" policies for using breathing apparatus, which it says is "one of the biggest threats to firefighters' health and safety in decades".

New instructions from the National Fire Chiefs Council are that they should don their breathing apparatus without checking it.

Some fire authorities have said that they will not implement the policy – but others have indicated that they will push ahead.

It took a long battle with the Health and Safety Executive who ignored the complaint for a year, but the HSE has U-turned and will now be investigating the policy.

National officer Riccardo la Torre said: "The change to breathing apparatus safety procedures is one of the biggest threats to firefighters' health and safety in decades. We will continue to hold the Health and Safety Executive to account and challenge any fire and rescue service that tries to implement this practice. We are prepared to take whatever action is necessary to stop this policy."

This is the sort of thing that the smaller, specialised unions tend to do much better than the larger unions who often do not have the right expertise in the right place to deal with such

technical questions.

Dodgy Doings

Whilst the FBU does good work on behalf of the public and its members, it also has an interesting internal life that is not very edifying. The union's expense account has some interesting items on it. Amongst other things, it is unclear why the union's senior officials really need very expensive exercise bikes.

Court battles have been fought to even allow union members sight of the union accounts. In one case, after using an expensive QC to fight the issue an aggrieved member was only allowed to read the accounts so long as he took no notes and had his phone switched off. Accusations have been made that even the Union's executive have been kept in the dark about severance payments to departing officials.

In one case an official was dismissed for supporting Brexit in a personal capacity, a matter ruled illegal by an Employment Tribunal. This cost the union a pretty penny in legal fees.

More recently, three senior officials have departed with considerable pay-offs and gagging clauses. The reasons for their leaving are unclear, but one alleges bullying by the General Secretary.

The fact that such payments have been concealed could even land the person responsible for compiling the official accounts in one of His Majesty's penal

establishments.

One national official received a secret pay-off of £100,000 and another £50,000, with another receiving an unknown sum, which certainly isn't peanuts. All three came with non-disclosure agreements. Their salaries were high enough to be individually listed in the obligatory annual returns to the certification officer, but of their pay-offs there is no mention.

According to the *Campaign for a Democratic FBU* blog, five members of the FBU have "submitted a collective complaint to the certification officer about the failure of the leadership to disclose the exit payments in the annual return and statement to members".

The blog is surely correct to say that: "It is almost certain that the certification officer will launch an investigation into the matter. It appears inevitable, then, that this whole rotten scandal is set to deepen further. This is no longer just a debate about internal union accountability and transparency; the affair has moved into the area of criminality."

The FBU has not made any comment on the blog's claims.

The present leadership when elected were hailed for being on the left. The blog's authors are not, but dodgy practice in trade unions whether by senior officers or the humblest branch secretary is unacceptable whatever the colour of the accusers or accused and must be rooted out.

On the Job...

by New Worker correspondent

In another branch of the emergency services, much less admired by New Worker readers, the police and their civilian workers presently have pay disputes.

Police civilian workers in England and Wales have been offered a seven per cent pay rise. Their main union, Unison state that the hourly rate for the lowest paid police staff will rise from £10.62 to £11.46 per hour, or an increase of £1,446 per year to take lowest annual salaries rise from £20,655 to £22,101.

Additionally, the standby payments to employees who are asked to be available for work outside their normal hours will

continued on page 4...

...continued from page 3

rise by seven per cent, £32.23 to £34.49.

Unison is recommending acceptance in a digital ballot this week, but national police and justice officer Ben Priestley warns that: "It's now up to police staff to decide if they want to accept the offer. If they don't, the only alternative will be to ballot for possible industrial action."

The police officers in London's Metropolitan Police are also getting a seven per cent pay rise, but with an £1,000 one-off payment for all but the highest grades. New recruits who complete their training will also get an extra £100 per month. The Met Police has said it will work with trade unions to negotiate and finalise an equivalent pay award for police staff.

Paul Deller, the General Secretary of the Met Federation, which is a substitute trade union, said that the award "demonstrates how far policing has fallen behind in terms of pay. The commissioner has recognised this and has been vocal in his calls for a substantial pay rise."

Their opposite numbers in Scotland are also involved in a

pay dispute. The Scottish Police Federation (SPF) have submitted an 8.5 per cent pay claim and warn that if it is turned down, they will withdraw "goodwill" as they cannot go on strike or refuse overtime.

But they can impose a work to rule, as happened last year when they rejected a £565 rise. This resulted in a five per cent rise and the magical return of "goodwill".

The SPF says that combining last year's rise with its demands would put them in line with two-year deals given to teachers, firefighters and some nurses.

They are likely to have a fight on their hands, however, as the increase in the police budget was below inflation and is a real-terms cut.

SPF chair David Threadgold said: "We are looking for the police to be treated fairly while recognising the fact that we cannot strike, we cannot withdraw our labour." He also helpfully pointed out that: "There's clear evidence that when other public sector workers use their right to strike, then pay settlements that could never be increased suddenly find themselves being increased." He also warned:

"There's no way of addressing the issues of fair pay without potentially taking disruptive action."

And on the Blink...

by New Worker correspondent

The other main 999 service, the ambulance service, which includes drivers, paramedics and call-centre handlers, saw workers get the general NHS rise of five per cent plus as a one-off lump sum earlier this year.

The last action this year was in North Yorkshire where the Ambulance Trust only coughed up a lump sum that had been paid to other NHS workers after Unite threatened industrial action. This occurred after the other NHS unions, GMB and Unison, had agreed to a settlement. Thanks to the Barnett formula, Scottish ambulance workers received a 6.5 per cent rise.

It is clear, however, that not all is well in the ambulance service. This year has seen 6,968 ambulance workers leave their

jobs in England, a figure almost double that of 2019–20. At present there are 2,954 vacancies, a figure 51.2 per cent higher than the last pre-COVID period.

West Midlands lost more than 1,000 staff members, giving them a turnover rate of 14 per cent. Even worse were South Central and South East Coast ambulance services, which lost 927 and 802, or turnover rates of 21 and 18 per cent respectively. Yorkshire ambulance service has the highest vacancy rate, with more than nearly a fifth of positions unfilled and is short of 1,157 staff.

The Yorkshire Ambulance Service (YAS) has a brilliant idea to get round the problem: it is encouraging volunteers to take over. Anyone over 18 with a driving licence can apply and no previous medical experience is required to be on call for five hours per week. Sounds fun, this correspondent would like to offer his services for a bit of simple brain surgery.

The Liberal Democrats are calling for ministers to investigate the rise in paramedics leaving the ambulance service and to launch a drive to retain, recruit and train paramedics and other ambulance service staff to fill the gaps.

Daisy Cooper, Liberal Democrat health and social care spokesperson who extracted the damning figures from an unwilling government, said: "With patients struggling to see a GP at the front door of the NHS and unable to access social care at the back door of the NHS, ambulance crews are unfairly caught between a rock and a hard place,

picking up the slack from a health and care system that is broken at both ends...

"Paramedics perform heroics every day, but the pressures of a broken system are piling up. With warnings that the government is unprepared for the next winter crisis, ambulance services need help now."

In Wales the situation is just as bad. The same figures show that 230 people left the Welsh Ambulance service in 2019–20, but this has now doubled to 466. In percentage terms this is double the English figure. ITV spoke to a necessarily anonymous worker who said the job is "absolutely demoralising", adding that: "I absolutely would not have gone into this career if I knew then what I know now. You are apologising to people, patients and apologising to family members and members of the public for the delays and the state of the service and the state of the NHS."

GMB representative and emergency medical technician Giles George said: "Staff moral over the last 12 years has just gone downwards and this is the worst I've ever seen it," blaming "an increase in work, there's been massive delays outside hospitals when we get to hospital, and staff feel there's a bit of a toxic management environment and people want to leave."

The Welsh Ambulance Service dismissed the complaints, saying that many of the departing staff were hired temporarily during the COVID-19 pandemic and that pension changes encouraged more people to take early retirement.

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

**5th September
2003**

THE MAIN militant Kurdish group in Turkey has ended a four-year unilateral ceasefire declared after the capture of its leader Abdullah Öcalan. A spokesman for the group, until recently known as the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) – which has been pressing the Turkish government to announce a truce of its own – accused the authorities of failing to grant Kurds greater political and cultural rights.

The rebel movement changed its name to Kadek (Congress of Democracy in Kurdistan) last year.

The announcement came as

some 15,000 Kurds staged a demonstration in Diyarbakir – the biggest city in the south east – to press for more rights and to urge a general amnesty for Kurdish prisoners. Several armed clashes were reported between suspected rebels and Turkish police.

Last month, the Turkish government proclaimed a partial amnesty for the estimated 5,000 guerrillas hiding in the northern mountains of Iraq, but it did not cover the group's leader. The bill allows for outright pardons for rebels who surrender and reduced sentences for those already in jail if they give information about their underground activities.

Turkey, which along with the USA and many European countries, regards Kadek as a terrorist organisation, has repeatedly rejected calls to negotiate a solution to the Kurdish conflict.

Under pressure from the EU, which Turkey has long sought to join, the Ankara government recently adopted reforms al-

lowing the country's Kurdish minority to be taught its own language and permitting radio and broadcasting in Kurdish – both objectives the rebels have pursued for years. But the Kurds say the measures are not being implemented and that they continue to face oppression and discrimination.

The PKK has not yet declared war on Turkey. This was announced by an official representative of the party in Argentina.

Yilmaz Shiar said the PKK is giving Turkey three months to consider holding negotiations with the Kurds. If Turkey does not agree to hold talks the Kurds may declare war. "Moreover, Kurds will not fight in the mountains and longer. It will be new, contemporary warfare," he said.

The PKK is demanding better prison conditions for its jailed leader and they want an independent committee to make sure he remains in good health. If his health deteriorates war may begin earlier than expected.

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US Atom Chief Hid Radioactivity Dangers From Public

by Fantine Gardinier

A research group specialising in once-secret files has published a new dossier revealing that the director of the USA's top secret effort to build an atomic bomb lied to politicians and the public about the dangers posed by radioactive materials.

The files were released by the National Security Archive, a private research organisation based at George Washington University in Washington.

The findings show US Army General Leslie Groves, who oversaw the Manhattan Project, lied to Congress and the American public about the harmful effects of radiation exposure. They also reveal J Robert Oppenheimer, the director of the Los Alamos lab at the centre of the project and the subject of a recently released major film, knew about Groves's deception and did nothing to correct it.

At first, Groves claimed the radioactive materials were harmless out of simple ignorance, but later it became deliberate deception, the files show.

One file in the dossier is dated 1st September 1945 – about three weeks after the second of two atom bombs was dropped on Japan, killing more than 110,000 people and bringing an abrupt end to the Second World War.

Titled *Calculated Biological Effects of Atomic Explosion in Hiroshima and Nagasaki*, the two Japanese cities targeted, the memo revealed some of the bomb victims had not died from the air blast or the heat of the explosion, but from poisoning caused by radioactive fallout. Those victims died not when the



bombs exploded, but days or weeks later.

The previous day, Groves told reporters that radiation had caused no deaths, dismissing reports in Asian newspapers as “propaganda”. Although the Imperial Japanese government had announced its surrender on 15th August the war was not formally concluded until 2nd September 1945.

In another document, George Kistiakowsky, the Los Alamos scientist who authored the 1st September report, sent a memo to Oppenheimer that same day, revealing that he hesitated to pass the study along because of Groves's press comments.

Later reports from November of that year described further cases of radiation sickness amongst Japanese victims. One report by the Manhattan Project's chief medical officer, Stafford Warren, dated 27th November described thousands of cases in Japanese hospitals that were consistent with the effects of radiation poisoning, which US scientists had already closely documented up-close after several of their own suffered catastrophic irradiation and died whilst

developing the atom bomb.

The report was addressed to Groves, who three days later told the Senate Special Committee on Atomic Energy when asked about “radioactive residue” in Hiroshima and Nagasaki: “There is none. That is a very positive ‘none’.”

Groves acknowledged many had died from radiation exposure, but claimed it was from the time the bomb went off and not from fallout. In his testimony, he even claimed radiation victims would die “without undue suffering. In fact,

they say it is a very pleasant way to die.”

Other documents show that whilst the atom bomb was still in development, the scientists already feared a toxic “cloud” of “radioactive dust” could be stirred up by the weapon's explosion and loiter in the air for “hours after the detonation”. They urged Groves to evacuate the test site prior to the Trinity blast that July but Groves dismissed their fears, accusing them of being “a Hearst propagandist” – that is, a writer for a notorious muck-raking newspaper.

Indeed, the 16th July 1945 Trinity blast sent just such a toxic cloud across the New Mexico Jornada del Muerto plains, dousing communities of Hispanic and Apache farmers who have become known as the Tularosa Downwinders.

They have suffered high rates of radiation-related illnesses, such as leukaemia and other forms of cancer, and had to fight the federal government for compensation.

Five days after the Trinity test, on 21st July 1945,

Warren wrote in a document included in the dossier that “the dust outfall from the various portions of the cloud was potentially a very serious hazard over a band almost 30 miles wide extending almost 90 miles northeast of the site,” adding that there was still “a tremendous amount of radioactive dust floating in the air.”

Nine days later, however, Groves told US Army Chief of Staff Gen George Marshall that “no damaging effects are anticipated on the ground from radioactive materials” by using the weapon.

All involved scientists knew it but have chosen to ignore Marie Curie's well recorded death from radiation in their own research.

In the USA a person can be charged and prosecuted for lying to the FBI and imprisoned, yet the military and political elite are exempt for lying to the public even when their lies cost lives sometimes in the millions. It stinks to high heaven yet the people can't smell it.

Sputnik



• Remembering the dead at the Nagasaki shrine.

Niger: Far From a Typical Coup

by Vijay Prashad

On 26th July 2023, Niger's presidential guard moved against the sitting president – Mohamed Bazoum – and conducted a coup d'état. A brief contest amongst the various armed forces in the country ended with all the branches agreeing to the removal of Bazoum and the creation of a military junta led by presidential guard commander general Abdourahamane 'Omar' Tchiani.

This is the fourth country in the Sahel region of Africa to have experienced a coup – the other three being Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. The new government announced that it would stop allowing France to leech Niger's uranium (one in three light-bulbs in France is powered by the uranium from the field in Arlit, northern Niger).

Tchiani's government revoked all military co-operation with France, which means that the 1,500 French troops will need to start packing their bags (as they did in both Burkina Faso and Mali). Meanwhile, there has been no public statement about Airbase 201, the US facility in Agadez, 1,000 km from the country's capital of Niamey. This is the largest drone base in the world and key to US operations across the Sahel. US troops have been told to remain on the base for now and drone flights have been suspended. The coup is certainly against the French presence in Niger, but

this anti-French sentiment has not enveloped the US military footprint in the country.

Interventions

Hours after the coup was stabilised, the main Western states – especially France and the USA – condemned the coup and asked for the reinstatement of Bazoum, who was immediately detained by the new government. But neither France nor the USA appeared to want to lead the response to the coup. Earlier this year, the French and US governments worried about an insurgency in northern Mozambique that impacted the assets of the Total-Exxon natural gas field off the coastline of Cabo Delgado. Rather than send in French and US troops, which would have polarised the population and increased anti-Western sentiment, the French and the USA made a deal for Rwanda to send its troops into Mozambique.

Rwandan troops entered the northern province of Mozambique and shut

down the insurgency. Both Western powers seem to favour a 'Rwanda-type' solution to the coup in Niger, but rather than have Rwanda enter Niger the hope was for ECOWAS – the Economic Community of West African States – to send in its force to restore Bazoum.

A day after the coup, ECOWAS condemned the new Niger government. ECOWAS encompasses 15 west African states, which in the last few years has suspended Burkina Faso and Mali from its ranks because of the coups in that country; Niger was also suspended from ECOWAS a few days after the coup.

Formed in 1975 as an economic bloc, the grouping decided – despite no mandate in its original mission – to send in peacekeeping forces in 1990 into the heart of the Liberian Civil War. Since then, ECOWAS has sent its peacekeeping troops to several countries in the region, including Sierra Leone and Gambia.

Not long after the coup in Niger, ECOWAS placed an embargo on the country that

included suspending its right to basic commercial transactions with its neighbours, freezing Niger's central bank assets that are held in regional banks and stopping foreign aid (which comprises 40 per cent of Niger's budget). The most striking statement was that ECOWAS would take "all measures necessary to restore constitutional order". A 6th August deadline given by ECOWAS came and went because the bloc could not agree to send troops across the border.

ECOWAS asked for a "standby force" to be assembled and ready to invade Niger. Then, ECOWAS said it would meet on 12th August in Accra, Ghana, to go over its options. That meeting was cancelled for "technical reasons". Mass demonstrations in key ECOWAS countries – such as Nigeria and Senegal – against an ECOWAS military invasion of Niger have confounded their own politicians who support an intervention. But it would be naïve to suggest that no intervention is possible.

When ECOWAS suggested the possibil-

ity of an intervention into Niger, the military governments in Burkina Faso and Mali said that this would be a "declaration of war" not only against Niger but also against their countries. On 2nd August one of the key leaders of the Niger coup, General Salifou Mody, travelled to Bamako (Mali) and Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) to discuss the situation in the region and to co-ordinate their response to the possibility of an ECOWAS – or Western – military intervention into Niger. Ten days later, General Moussa Salaou Barroumou went to Conakry (Guinea) to seek that country's support for Niger from the leader of the military government in that country, Mamadi Doumbouya.

Suggestions have already been floated for Niger – one of the most important countries in the Sahel – to form part of the conversation about a federation that will include Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali. This would be a federation of countries that have had coups to overthrow what have been seen to be pro-western

governments that have not met the expectations of increasingly impoverished populations.

Resistance to imperialism

The story of the coup in Niger becomes partly the story of what the communist journalist Ruth First called "the contagion of the coup" in her remarkable book, *The Barrel of the Gun: Political Power in Africa and the Coup d'états* (1970). Over the course of the last 30 years, politics in the Sahel countries has seriously desiccated. Parties with a history in the national liberation movements, even the socialist movements (such as Bazoum's party) have collapsed into being representatives of their elites, who are conduits of a Western agenda.

The French-US-NATO war in Libya in 2011 allowed jihadi groups to pour out of Libya and flock into southern Algeria and into the Sahel (almost half of Mali is held by al-Qaeda-linked formations). The entry of these forces gave the local elites and the West the justification to further tighten limited trade union freedoms and to excise the Left from the ranks of the established political parties. It is not as if the leaders of the mainline political parties are right-wing or centre-right, but that whatever their orientation, they have no real independence from the will of Paris and Washington. They became – to use a word on the ground –



• Niger -- the times they are a'changing.

‘stooges’ of the West.

In the absence of any reliable political instruments, the discarded rural and petty-bourgeois sections of the country turn to their children in the armed forces for leadership. People such as Burkina Faso’s Captain Ibrahim Traoré (born 1988), who was raised in the rural province of Mouhoun, and Colonel Assimi Goïta (born 1988), who comes from the cattle market town and military redoubt of Kati, represent these broad class fractions perfectly. Their communities have been utterly

left out of the hard austerity programmes of the International Monetary Fund, of the theft of their resources by western multinationals, and of the payments for Western military garrisons in the country.

Discarded populations with no real political platform to speak for them, these communities have rallied behind their young men in the military. These are ‘Colonels’ Coups’ – coups of ordinary people who have no other options – not ‘Generals’ Coups’ – coups of the elites to stem the

political advancement of the people. That is why the coup in Niger is being defended in mass rallies from Niamey to the small, remote towns that border Libya.

When I travelled to these regions before the pandemic, it was clear that the anti-French sentiment found no channel of expression other than hope for a military coup that would bring in leaders such as Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, who had been assassinated in 1987. Captain Traoré, in fact, sports a red beret like Sankara,

speaks with Sankara’s left-wing frankness, and even mimics Sankara’s diction. It would be a mistake to see these men as from the Left because they are moved by anger at the failure of the elites and of Western policy. They do not come to power with a well-worked-out agenda built from Left political traditions.

The Niger military leaders have formed a 21-person cabinet headed by Ali Mahaman Lamine Zeine, a civilian who had been a finance minister in a previous government and worked at the Af-

rican Development Bank in Chad. Military leaders are prominent in the cabinet. Whether the appointment of this civilian-led cabinet will divide the ranks of ECOWAS is to be seen. Certainly, Western imperialist forces – notably the USA with troops on the ground in Niger – would not like to see this torque of coups remain in place.

Europe – through French leadership – had shifted the borders of their continent from north of the Mediterranean Sea to south of the Sahara Desert, suborning the Sahel states

into a project known as G-5 Sahel. Now with anti-French governments in three of these states (Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger) and with the possibility of trouble in the two remaining states (Chad and Mauritania), Europe will have to retreat to its coastline. Sanctions to deplete the mass support of the new governments will increase, and the possibility of military intervention will hang over the region like a famished vulture.

*People’s Democracy
(India)*

Reaching for the heights in Cuba

by Ángel Freddy
Pérez Cabrera

Aliuska Lores Ramírez was the first woman power-line worker in Cuba. Today there are still only three in the country. The pioneering Cuban woman from Santa Clara in the power-line work, Aliuska Lores Ramírez can be seen in her overalls, wearing a helmet, boots and all the security accessories required for that job.

Off-duty few people might imagine a woman like her withstanding August’s suffocating heat whilst climbing a power line post to repair an electrical fault.

It was not easy to get this far. She worked for three years as an inspector in the Capiro Commercial Office; however, she cannot tell if it was her husband’s daily work at Villa Clara’s Electric Company, or many other reasons that motivated her to choose this hard job.

Many times I wondered: “Why I cannot do that? I felt I was ready to do the job, one day I put on a bold front and I told my higher-ups that I wanted to take a course for power-line work.” Aliuska recalls that she always received a no for an answer.

“This is a job for men. It’s not for women, you’re not able to do it, don’t even try as it’s very dangerous for a woman’, my comrades used to say. So did my husband.” But after persisting for four years she got the approval to take a course for power line workers.

There, for six months, she had one of the most pleasant experiences in her life, as she says. “I was surrounded by men. They tried to protect me, however, my views had to be considered and I did not allow any kind of differences, I went through the training side-by-side with my colleagues, as I knew that the success in my future job depended on



that experience.”

Once she was qualified, Lores Ramírez began to do the job of her dreams and she never forgets the first time she went to work with the team. “That day when we arrive to the spot where the failure was reported, a line worker moved to the post and I stood in his way to tell him, ‘don’t even try, that job is mine today’, and to this day I do the repairs with the team.”

About her relation-

ship with the rest of her male comrades she says that is something nice, they are based on respect and consideration, not being under-estimated or being assigned the easiest jobs. “I do all the things power line workers do,” she proudly states.

Amongst the biggest challenges in that period of work, she recalled as something hard the first time she had to climb a 110kV post with spurs. When I reached the al-

titude, I told myself: “If I achieved to do this, I think no goal is impossible for me.”

Aliuska has three children, her youngest daughter, Anyelín, enthuses over following in the footsteps of her mother, something that fills her with satisfaction, as well as the understanding she receives from her husband, who supports her and gives her tips on how to do the job.

Not suffering any ac-

cidents in the period of time that she has been doing the job as a power-line worker has given her much confidence and optimism. She recognizes that there is still much to learn, however, and a long way to go to realise the dream of becoming instructor someday, a higher step in her career.

As for her personal life, she says that is quite hard since she arrives home late and really tired. But she enjoys every minute of it. Likewise, the complexity and harshness of the job does not keep her from having time for the rest of her activities.

She also says that the happiest day of her life will be when all the traces of discrimination still existing in society, despite the advances achieved in Cuba, are finally over. “Then we will be more than just three, but many more women will join this task as line-workers in our country.”

Granma

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

To our regret, the continuation of bloody hostilities in Ukraine today is directly related to the deteriorating living conditions of workers in other countries, and this requires some clarifications.

The war in Ukraine is accompanied by numerous and almost total lies and silence in the media whilst workers and unions are forced to go on strike and fight desperately for a few pounds on the minimum wage. At the same time, Rishi Sunak is spending billions of pounds to fund Zelensky's Nazis government.

In Ukraine, Zelensky's Nazis are committing genocide against the Russian-Ukrainians, killing, beating, torturing and imprisoning people just for using the Russian language. All opposition political parties are banned. Opposition presses and media are banned. People, like slaves, are caught in the streets, handcuffed and under armed guard loaded into trucks and press-ganged into the trenches.

In Britain people are forced to endure the hardships and deprivations of life, receiving a miserable pittance for each working hour. The surplus value and the added value workers produce are stolen from them.

We are writing this letter to you in the hope of starting a discussion on the matter mentioned above.

We hope to find a solution to get us out of this situation. It should help Ukrainians find peace and freedom, and your country's workers can use the billions of pounds saved from an unnecessary distant war and channel them into local social improvements and raising the minimum wage.

We believe that your union members have many reasons to ask for fair treatment and demand an ap-

propriate fraction from the funds wasted on the unwanted war.

Workers of all countries, Unite!

Together we win!

John Colter
International Department
Derzhava Party

Dear Comrades

A quick glance at the national media will show us that the capitalist plan is in full bloom. We see the poor ruined by ever higher interest rates, massive increases by fuel businesses with ever higher profits, the government allowing oil licences to those businesses to increase their bloated profits even higher (and to hell with the heat-waves, floods and wildfires caused by fossil fuel global warming).

We see what is in effect a one-party state being set up in this country with identical policies in both the Conservative and Labour parties. If the Tories read out a Labour policy speech on radio and Labour read out a Conservative policy speech, I doubt whether anyone would notice the difference.

We shun expanding trade with China because the USA would not like us having more trade with them, and perhaps we play with fire, slipping ever closer to more involvement with the war in Ukraine.

One thing puzzled me. As far as I know, not a single newspaper or media outlet has commented on the fact that with Rishi Sunak we have (as far as I know) our first fully fledged capitalist leader, Mrs Thatcher's capitalist 'reign over us' was ideologically planned, but Mr Sunak's is to rule for himself and his fellow bankers.

Plainly he is in a good position to turn this policy into profits for the bankers. The old saying "a man cannot serve two masters" comes to mind – so

which master is Mr Sunak serving, the banks or the country?

But we know the answer to that already. I expect a lot of the MPs we have will be like the former government secretary Teresa Villiers who forgot the £70,000 Shell shares. Corruption everywhere, or as my late father always used to say when he heard of another political scandal, "politicians are as straight as a butcher's hook".

Robert J Smith
Sutton-in-Ashfield

Dear Comrades

Life for many existing under capitalism, has, due to consistent propaganda, become one of unquestioning acceptance of the status quo as people struggle to cope with falling wage values, rising prices and rapidly declining public services. They sense something is very wrong but feel that there is nothing they can do about it. The burden of capitalism's deep crises is being carried on the backs of the working class as their standards of living continue to fall.

At the international level US imperialism, itself in rapid decline, attempts to ensure its survival with policies that are designed to prevent or slow economic development amongst developing nations. The USA sanctions, applies trade embargoes, enforces financial penalties and undertakes the disruption of supply chains; all applied in such a way that their lesser imperialist allies are also weakened and forced to become more dependent on their master.

Given its priorities of quick profits, exploitation of labour and the plunder of the world's resources, Imperialism is in no position to cope with the serious and complex challenges that we face today. Indeed, its creation of political instability, engineering of armed conflicts, destroying

competition and abandoning its craven allies when it suits them has led to a trail of destruction and made the capitalist recession much worse. Many countries now look to China for economic stability and trading opportunities. The USA meanwhile is doing everything it can to weaken China and to slow its progress.

The threat from global warming is one of the most serious problems that we face today. Under pressure from fossil fuel lobby groups, governments have been slow to react. Britain has now belatedly adopted ambitious targets that will ban new petrol and diesel cars from 2030 and gas boilers in new builds from 2025. This could be a costly nightmare for drivers and new home owners. A lack of charging points and with fuel bills continuing to escalate, a new crisis is coming. Given the government's appalling record on infrastructure maintenance and new investment many people fear for their future. No doubt some are planning to make a fortune whilst the rest shiver.

South Africa recently hosted the BRICS annual conference. A worldwide grouping of nations came together to discuss sustainable economic development, trade and investment, with particular emphasis on infrastructure building. Unlike Western meetings, dominated by wealthy former colonial powers eager to maintain their stranglehold and exploitation of emerging nations, this gathering was based upon consensus. The participants with different cultures, their own priorities and some with disagreements, all realise that dialogue and co-operation is the only way forwards.

Britain's working class now faces a sharp and intensified class struggle as a dangerous and desperate bourgeois establishment

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.

FRI 8 SEPT–MON 30 OCT

The Mistake. Anti-nuclear touring play by Michael Mears. See michaelmears.org for 28 venues.

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.

prepares its attack. We need to fightback more strongly with greater sales of the *New Worker*. We must expose the class collaboration of the Labour leadership that will achieve nothing for ordinary people. We must make workers aware the ineffective tame submission of the right-wing union leaderships who

will not provide the full, committed support needed when working men and women defend their rights.

Where are all the young people who supported Jeremy Corbyn. Where are all the young revolutionaries. Have they no fire in their bellies any longer?

John Maryon
Suffolk

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Communists and the united front by Neil Harris. £2 plus 50p p&p. (New Worker reprint).

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NCP Lit. PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.

(cheques to New Worker)

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

There's a new air of optimism in the Anas Sarwar's camp these days following the publication of opinion polls that put Scottish Labour almost neck and neck with the SNP. A Survation poll puts the nationalists still in the lead with 37 per cent. But Labour's close behind at 35 whilst the Tories trail on 17 per cent. Some say the SNP could lose 24 Westminster seats at the next general election. Although the election is still over a year away, the SNP must now deeply regret all talk about making it a 'referendum' on independence.

Mysteries of the Deep

Last weekend saw the biggest hunt in 50 years for the Loch Ness Monster with hundreds of people, some from as far afield as Japan and New Zealand, heading to the south of Inverness with drones, infrared cameras and webcams in search of the fabulous beast that has been a lucrative staple of the local tourist trade since 1933.

Predictably they had no such luck. But at the same time another long-standing mystery remains unresolved. This is the mystery of SNP finances, particularly the missing £660,000 "ring-fenced" referendum fund that led to the resignation of Nicola Sturgeon and her CEO husband.

After the resignation of their former accountants the SNP narrowly managed to find a Manchester-based accountant to audit their books and submit the accounts to the Electoral Commission just in time to qualify for Short Money to support their Westminster activities. These have now been published and make interesting reading. These show a deficit of over £800,000 and that the SNP lost 8,600 members in the first six months of this year alone. In December 2021 it had 103,884 members, 82,884 in December 2022 and 73,936 in late June.

Overall the accounts show a total income for £4,248,625 and expenditure of £5,052,284 resulting in a deficit of £803,659, an increase from £732,072 in 2021. With a General Election in the offing, which will cost the SNP about £1.5 million, that deficit is a serious matter.

Commenting on the figures the new SNP leader, Humza Yousaf, denied the party was insolvent. That is technically correct as most of its debts are funds due to local associations that could be withheld if the going gets tougher, but a quarter of a million is owed to trade creditors and it is leaking members. The accounts of the SNP's deadly enemy, Alex Salmond's Alba Party, show it has attracted about 7,500 of the 30,000 departed SNP members and has a healthier bank balance.

The self-styled 'Reverend' Stuart Campbell, on his *Wings Over Scotland* blog (based in the very English city of Bath) has had a close look at the accounts and came up with some interesting observations.

He noted that the 2022 annual conference cost £569,853. This included hiring an Aberdeen venue that can hold 15,000 people for £186,952. This required a great deal of creative energy to design the hall layout to make it look full for the cameras with only about 800 people in it. Curiously, the audio-visual costs for the event were £339,117. This means that about £425 was spent providing each of the 800 delegates with the sound systems and huge AV screens. Trips to the Paris Disney theme park for all delegates would have been cheaper, the Reverend Campbell observes.

Also noteworthy was the compulsory MPs and MSPs levy, which amounts to £3,000 per year and accounts for seven per cent of the party's income. But about 20 of them don't seem to pay it. The notorious £107,062 loan from former CEO Peter 'Mr Sturgeon' Murrell has not been repaid. The SNP also seems to have spent £470,301 on IT equipment for its 25 staff, only two years after another large spend on IT. Even very expensive software would cost £80,000 for an organisation the size of the SNP, leaving £400,000 to be explained.

It has been suggested the excessive conference and IT expenses are due to the SNP building a TV studio in their Edinburgh HQ, which as it has not been used is too embarrassing to mention in public.

Tellingly, the Auditors qualified the accounts saying they could not account for the source of some of the money received.

This particular matter soon became the subject of an official complaint about the accounts to the Greater Manchester Police. According to the *Sunday Mail* someone had complained that "donations that there are no records of ... hundreds of thousands of pounds of donations that allegedly were raffles, fundraising etc ... I believe these were actually cash gifts as part of a cash for seats operation to place people who made substantial donations to them into seats to gain elected office."

There is some good news for the SNP, however. They now have a new £95,000 per year CEO. He is Murray Foote, their former communications officer who had to resign in March when he strongly denied press reports that membership had fallen by 30,000, which in fact were perfectly true. This is the same Murray Foote who authored the pre Referendum "Vow" proposals for further devolution, published immediately before the vote, which are wrongly claimed to be the reason for the SNP losing the 2014 Referendum. His history has got many SNP members and other nationalists fuming however, and encouraged another bout of speculation that the party is under the control of MI5.

Foote is also on record as denouncing the Police Scotland investigation into party finances as "grotesque" and condemned their "storming" of SNP HQ that was a "wild goose chase". If his claims are as accurate as those that he made about the membership figures, the SNP is in deep trouble.

Deputy Labour leader Jackie Baillie had a point when she said: "This is just the latest continuity candidate to be brought back by Humza Yousaf who is desperately trying to get the band back together ahead of what could be their farewell tour."

CONTACT US...

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London District NCP: <http://londoncommunists.blogspot.com/>

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

British Museum must return Chinese relics!

by Global Times

We, as part of the Chinese media, formally request the British Museum to return all Chinese cultural relics acquired through improper channels to China free of charge, and to refrain from adopting a resistant, protracted and perfunctory attitude. First of all, a public commitment should be made to the world for the return of the relics and this long overdue work should begin as soon as possible. We also support the claims for the restitution of cultural relics made by other countries that have been looted by Britain, such as India, Nigeria and South Africa.

We urge the British government to co-operate in the legal and other procedures to facilitate the process, which will be a test and verification of Britain's sincerity in clearing the colonial stain and making amends for its historical sins.

The recent revelation that some 2,000 artifacts from the British Museum's collection inexplicably went missing has shocked not only the UK, but also all other countries that have collections in the British Museum. The huge number of missing artifacts, the long duration of the case, and the seriousness of the suspected internal thief have made it impossible to connect it with the British Museum, one

of the largest museums in the world. People have questioned why the police and the museum have delayed releasing photos and detailed descriptions of the stolen artifacts. The failure to release photos may indicate that the British Museum still has not been able to find out exactly how much of its vast collection has been lost, probably more than 2,000 pieces.

The vast majority of the British Museum's huge collection of up to eight-million items came from countries other than the UK, and a significant portion of it was acquired through improper channels, even dirty and sinful means. As a result, the British Museum has earned the name of the world's largest "receiver of stolen goods" which exhibits "stolen cultural property". In other words, what the British Museum fails to take good care of, and what it

loses and breaks, is in fact mainly cultural property belonging to other countries, so how can this not be heartbreaking.

The huge loopholes in the management and security of cultural objects in the British Museum exposed by this scandal have led to the collapse of a long-standing and widely circulated claim that "foreign cultural objects are better protected in the British Museum". This statement has been accepted by some people in the victimised countries, indirectly weakening the motivation and determination to recover the artifacts from the British Museum. This is doubtless an excuse for cultural colonisation and brainwashing of developing countries.

In the British Museum, there are about 23,000 cultural relics from China. Amongst them, about 2,000 pieces are on long-term display, including

the Admonitions of the Instructress to the Court Ladies from the Tang Dynasty, Liao tri-coloured luohan statues, ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, stone Buddhist sutra scrolls of the Wei and Jin dynasties, and other extremely valuable national treasures. It's difficult to trace how exactly China lost them to the British Museum, but most Chinese collections were certainly looted or stolen by Britain when it created and later took advantage of China's crisis, or even directly robbed China. As long as Britain cannot prove which collection was acquired legally and honestly, then the mother country of these collections has the right to seek their repatriation.

The UK, which has a bloody, ugly and shameful colonial history, has always had a strong sense of moral superiority over others, often claiming

the moral high ground to dictate to and even interfere in the internal affairs of other countries. We really do not know where their sense of moral superiority comes from. The UK, before pointing its finger at others, should first pay back its own historical debts and take the initiative to contact and discuss with the countries that have suffered from its colonial infringement on how to return the historical loot as soon as possible. It should not wait for others to come to its doorsteps and then use all sorts of excuses, thus leaving the world with a very unflattering impression once again.

Over the years, the British Museum has refused to return the cultural relics mainly on the grounds and basis of the British Museum Act, which was amended by the British Parliament in 1963 and basically prohibits the museum from returning any of

its collections. This is equivalent to the UK installing a threshold on its own door and then telling the owner of the relics that it cannot return the artifacts because it cannot get out of the door. It is obviously very hypocritical and ridiculous to use a law set by oneself as an excuse for refusing to obey international morality and fulfil international responsibility. The British Museum is a microcosm of the history of British colonial expansion. Even if the UK has wiped the fingerprints of the looters from these artifacts, it cannot erase the true ownership of these cultural properties.

Some say that the disappearance of 2,000 cultural relics from the British Museum could be the "largest" theft event to-date. In our view, the questionable origins of the millions of artifacts in the British Museum raise further concerns about what constitutes the "largest" theft. Recently, Greece once again called for the return of sculptures taken from the Parthenon Temple by Britain in the past, only to be accused by British politicians of "blatant opportunism". This once again reveals the 'traditions' of imperialism and colonialism. Britain's stubborn and evasive behaviour comes at the expense of the image and reputation of the British Museum and even the entire country. Let us see how long Britain can hold out before facing this issue.



Donald J Trump: Inmate Number P01135809

by Jonathan J Cooper

A camera clicks. In a fraction of a second, the shutter opens and then closes, freezing forever the image in front of it.

When the camera shutter blinked inside an Atlanta jail last week, it both created and documented a tiny inflection point in American life.

Captured for posterity, there was a former president of the USA, for the first time in history, under arrest and captured in the sort of frame more commonly associated with drug dealers or drunken drivers. The trappings of power gone, for that split second.

Left behind: an enduring image that will appear in history books long after Donald Trump is gone.

"It will be forever part of the iconography of being alive in this time," said Marty Kaplan, a professor at the University of Southern California Annenberg School of Communications.

In the photo, Trump confronts the camera in front of a bland grey backdrop, his eyes meeting the lens in an intense glare. He's wearing a blue suit, white shirt, and red tie, his shoulders squared, his head tilted slightly towards the camera. The sheriff's logo has been digitally added above his right shoulder.

Some of the 18 others charged with him in Georgia smiled in their booking photos



like they were posing for a yearbook. Not Trump. His defiance is palpable as if he's staring down a nemesis through the lens.

"It is not a comfortable feeling – especially when you've done nothing wrong," he later told Fox News Digital about the moment.

Trump facing charges is by now a familiar sight of 2023 to Americans who watched him stand before a judge in a New York courtroom or saw watercolour sketches from the inside of federal courthouses in Miami and Washington, where cameras aren't allowed. This is different.

As Anderson Cooper put it on CNN: "The former president of the United States has an inmate num-

ber." P01135809, to be exact. But until he surrendered to face charges of trying to steal the 2020 election in Georgia, his fourth indictment this year, he avoided having to pose for the iconic booking photo like millions accused of crimes before him.

Never mind that Trump, like all Americans, is innocent until proven guilty in court; the mug-shot and all it connotes packs an extra emotional and cultural punch.

A mug-shot is a visceral representation of the criminal justice system, a symbol of lost freedom. It permanently memorialises one of the worst days of a person's life, a moment not meant for a scrap-book.

It must be particularly foreign to a man

born into privilege, who famously loves to be in control, who is highly attentive to his image, and who rose to be the most powerful figure in the world.

"Indictment' is a sort of bloodless word. And words are pale compared to images," said Kaplan, a former speech-writer for Vice President Walter Mondale and Hollywood screen-writer. "A mug-shot is a genre. Its frame is: 'This is a deer caught in the headlights. This is the crook being nailed.' It's the walk of shame moment."

Trump is unlikely to treat the mug-shot as a moment of shame as he seeks a second term in the White House whilst fighting criminal charges in four jurisdictions. His campaign has reported

a spike in contributions each time he's been indicted.

And the imagery itself? Trump hasn't shied away from it. In fact, his campaign concocted one long before it became real.

Months before he was photographed in Georgia on Thursday evening, his campaign used the prospect of a mug-shot as a fundraising opportunity. For \$36, anyone can buy a T-shirt with a fake booking photo of Trump and the words "Not Guilty".

Dozens of similar designs are available to purchase online, including many that appeal to Trump's critics.

Now they have a real one to work with. Within minutes of the mug-shot's release, Trump's campaign used it in a fundraising appeal on its website. "BREAKING NEWS: THE MUGSHOT IS HERE," reads the subject line of the campaign's latest fundraising email, which advertises a new T-shirt with the image and this quote: "This mugshot will forever go down in history as a symbol of America's defiance of tyranny."

In a show of solidarity, a Republican Congresswoman, Marjorie Taylor Greene, posted to X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, a photo of herself smiling broadly in front of a grey background, the sheriff's logo in the top left corner to mimic the jail's style – essentially her DIY mug. "I stand with President Trump against the

commie DA Fani Willis," she said, a swipe at the Fulton County, Georgia, district attorney who persuaded a grand jury to indict Trump.

Recent history is full of politicians seeking political dividends from their booking photos. They've offered large smiles or defiant smirks and tried to make the best of their predicament.

Yet this is one of just 45 presidents in all of US history – not only someone who held the keys to the most powerful government in the world, but who held a position that for many these days, both at home and overseas, personifies the USA.

To see that face looking at a camera whose lens he is not seeking out – that's a potent moment.

"There's a power to the still image, which is inarguable," said Mitchell Stevens, a professor emeritus at New York University who has written a book about the place imagery holds in modern society and how it is supplanting the word.

"It kind of freezes a moment, and in this case, it's freezing an unhappy moment for Donald Trump," Stevens said. "And it's not something he can click away. It's not something he can simply brush off. That moment is going to live on. And it's entirely possible that it will end up as the image that history preserves of this man."

People's World (USA)

Racism, a systemic problem in the USA

by María Josefina Arce

One of the largest and most important mobilisations for social justice and equality in the USA took place in Washington on 28th August 1963. Six decades later racism continues to eat away at American society.

“...America has failed in its promise to its citizens of color,” said civil rights fighter Martin Luther King in his memorable *I Have a*

Dream speech to more than 250,000 people that day.

Today racism, police brutality, poverty and inequality continue to be a harsh reality for the African-American population, whose most basic rights are violated every day.

Racial hatred is unfortunately part of society. In the last few days, a new incident of this kind has been added to the already long list. An individual, who in various writings had

expressed his hatred towards blacks, shot three black people dead in a store in Jacksonville, Florida.

In addition, African-American citizens are routinely suspected, questioned and arrested by law enforcement on the streets at a much higher rate than whites.

They have also been subjected to excessive use of force by the police, which in many cases has resulted in their deaths. Let's remember the murder in 2020 of

George Floyd, which provoked the largest protests in decades on US soil. In just three years, however, more names have been added.

The COVID-19 pandemic came to deepen the inequality. According to experts, this important segment of the population will take longer to recover from the economic and health impact of the disease caused by the new coronavirus. Experts describe the recovery of most black people as sporadic and

uneven. Limited access to healthcare, food and housing insecurity, and setbacks in education are all contributing to this slow recovery.

Several studies revealed that in 2021, 19.5 per cent of the African-American population in the USA were living below the poverty level.

Other data confirm the prevailing racism. Three times as many black people are in prison as white people, and the incarceration

rate of black women is 1.7 times higher than that of white women. In 2020, nearly 39 per cent of this sector of society was homeless.

Martin Luther King's dream has unfortunately not been fulfilled. Racism is undoubtedly a systemic problem in the USA, which paradoxically ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1994.

Radio Havana Cuba

The road of prosperity: the China–Laos Railway

Speeding through mountains and valleys, trains are carrying a rising volume of freight and passengers on the China–Laos Railway, a travel option which is cost and time effective.

Since its launch in December 2021, the 1,035 km line, which runs from the Lao capital of Vientiane to Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan in south-west China, has generated benefits more than just at local levels.

With 19 million passengers and 24 million tonnes of freight delivered and its cross-border cargo transport covering over 10 countries and regions, the railway has become a docking project between the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Laos's strategy to convert itself from a landlocked country to a land-linked hub in Indo-China, benefiting both countries and beyond.

With only a 3.5 km-

long rail line to Thailand, the economic development of Laos, the only landlocked country in south-east Asia, had long been restricted.

The China–Laos Railway has become a game-changer for the country, opening it up to greater economic opportunities, boosting its connectivity with other parts of the region, and facilitating economic and trade co-operation.

In northern Laos, Yang Shixian's company has switched from road to rail and seen its freight costs fall. Now the railway handles all its shipments to China, about 3,000 tonnes of rubber products every month. “It helps us lower costs and enables us to offer higher wages to our employees,” Yang said.

The railway has also put the tourist industry on the fast track. The launch of the China–Laos Railway passenger service in April this year revived tourism in Laos, a top priority in the Lao

government's efforts to revitalise the economy.

In the first half of the year, Laos welcomed more than 1.6 million foreign tourists, compared with only 42,197 a year ago. The Lao authorities estimate that around 368,000 Chinese travellers will visit Laos in 2023, up 21 per cent from last year.

“The railway marks a milestone of the two countries' friendship in a new era,” said Manila Sombandith, the Lao-tian consul-general in Kunming.

For many, such as

Silivong Phouthachack, a Lao teacher, the railway is more than just a physical infrastructure of connectivity. It's a project that is set to boost people-to-people bonds.

Silivong and 39 others have just finished an 18-month-long course at the Kunming Railway Vocational & Technical College, where they were taught how to teach railway-related technology. They will be the first teachers in Laos's first railway vocational and technical college, which China assisted in building. “After I return, I will

teach what I've learned in China to others,” said Silivong.

The China–Laos Railway has turned the “hard link” between the two countries into a “heart link” between the two peoples, says Ma Yong, head of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies at the Yunnan Academy of Social Sciences. And Pannaros Boonserm, a 33-year-old Thai, is impressed by how the China–Laos Railway has changed people's lives in Laos. Working as a translator at the China–Thailand railway construction project, she hopes the China–Thailand railway will soon be up and running.

Having studied at Nankai University in north China's Tianjin municipality for several years, Pannaros visited many places in China and witnessed how high-speed railways have improved the local residents' living standards.

“I'm expecting the connectivity of the China–Laos–Thailand railway. By then, I can take a train trip all the way northward from Bangkok to Kunming in China's Yunnan province,” she said.

When the China–Thailand Railway is completed, it will take trains from the Thai capital of Bangkok to the northeastern border town of Nong Khai, where a bridge will connect it with the southern end of the China–Laos Railway.

The connection will not only inject vitality into the economy along the line but will strengthen the trans-Asian rail network. An artery running through Indo-China will be formed, which will further promote economy, trade and investment and boost common prosperity when linked to the China–Europe freight train network.

Xinhua



• arriving at Vientiane station