

Hezbollah pounds Israel after peace talks collapse!

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

The Lebanese front exploded last weekend with Israeli “pre-emptive” air raids on Lebanese resistance bases on Sunday, which were speedily followed by Hezbollah missile attacks on Zionist bases in northern Israel and the Golan Height.

Israeli troops and Zionist settler gangs have launched a new wave of terror against the Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. Hamas says its guerrillas have struck telling blows against the Israeli invaders in the Gaza Strip. And the Palestine Authority, the body which administers the “autonomous” zones in the West Bank, has applied to join BRICS following the economic bloc’s next summit that takes place in Russia in October.

Meanwhile, at least nine Palestinians have been killed after Israel launched a large-scale ground and air attack on the northern part of the occupied West Bank. An Israeli airstrike has hit the Nur Shams refugee camp near the city of Tulkarm, and Zionist settlers shot dead a Palestinian and wounded six others in an attack near Bethlehem. The Israeli raid that began early on Wednesday involves hundreds of ground soldiers sup-



• The West Bank resistance -- the Tulkarem brigade.

ported by warplanes, drones and bulldozers, targeting three areas simultaneously – Jenin, Tulkarm and Tubas – in the largest assault in two decades.

Last weekend the Lebanese resistance fired hundreds of rockets and drones towards Israel in retaliation for the July assassination of senior Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr. Hezbollah had delayed its reprisals against Israel to allow the Gaza ceasefire talks to continue in an attempt to see an end to the Israeli campaign of genocide in the besieged Palestinian enclave. But continuous stalling by the Israelis led to the collapse of mediation efforts last week. Escalation inevitably followed.

The Israelis say the Hezbollah attack was largely foiled by their so-called ‘Iron Dome’ air defences. But they also declared a 48-hour state of emergency and ordered all universities and beaches in the port city of Haifa to be closed until further notice. The Netanyahu government also banned coverage of the damage

inflicted by last Sunday’s Hezbollah strikes deep inside northern Israel. Reporters were told to obtain permission before publishing “damage caused by rocket attacks to strategic infrastructure or to military bases” to avoid “harm to Israeli forces on the ground”.

Hezbollah Secretary General Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah went on Lebanese TV soon after however, to say “we achieved and surpassed our objectives” after the resistance operation that went “as planned” and caused “great disruptions” inside the occupied lands. The main target of the operation was the Gilot base, just north of Tel Aviv, which houses the Israeli Mossad spy agency and military intelligence agencies. Nasrallah said Hezbollah did not target civilians in its retaliatory strikes. An Israeli naval boat was among the targets hit by Hezbollah rockets and at least one serviceman was killed and two others were wounded in the action.

Meanwhile the Israeli army has announced the death of four

of its forces and injuries to seven others as a result of resistance operations in the Gaza Strip. Speaking on Saturday, spokesman Daniel Hagari said the forces

belonged to a reconnaissance unit that had assaulted a building in Gaza City’s Zeitoun District three days earlier. Three of the invading troops died after the detonation of a bomb that had been hidden inside one of the building’s walls, while a fourth was killed during a gun battle with resistance fighters.

The regime claims that the deaths have taken the total number of the forces who have been killed during the Gaza war to 336. Though the regime under-reports the fatalities to maintain the morale of its forces and restrain the backlash from those demanding a ceasefire that could enable the return of the Israeli prisoners in Palestinian hands, the Israeli daily *Yedioth Ahronoth* (Latest News) reported that at least 10,000 Israeli soldiers have been killed or wounded in the 11-month conflict.

FUND

Well we only needed £74 to hit our target for August and we did it this week thanks to supporters in north Wales and Essex. All other donations will now be credited to the September appeal, which starts now. It’s the same target – £3,500, and the same objective – to keep our electronic press rolling to put the communist point of view back on the street.

Running a communist weekly is never easy at the best of times. We need a constant and generous flow of money to guarantee our survival and every pound helps keep the *New Worker* on the road. Don’t forget – we are the only communist weekly in Britain.

The ruling class want us to think there is no alternative to their rule or their worthless philosophy of consumerism which is a game that only the rich can play. They want to divert us with the racist rants of the fascists, the sham politics of the third-rate social-democrats, and the usual drink and drugs that are symptoms of bourgeois decadence.

There is a way out of the crisis but it’s not the way of the charlatans who pose as ‘revolutionaries’ but preach the same old clap-trap that has been rejected time and time again by the working class. We rely entirely on our supporters to keep us going. Get the *New Worker* out! Put the case for communism back on the streets!

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

A bridge too far

When Rishi Sunak called the snap election in July some Tories said he did it to ensure that Britain had a leader who could step in to cover Joe Biden as the head of the “free world” during the run-up to the American presidential election in November. We will never know whether Sunak actually believed this nonsense which, in any case, is now academic as both of them will soon depart, somewhat unwillingly, from the political stage this year. It does, however, reflect the delusions of grandeur of the British ruling class who believe that the American sphere of influence across the globe constitutes the ‘free world’ and that Britain is the second-in-command in policing it.

Although this may well have been true when Anglo-American imperialism led the pack against the Soviet Union at the beginning of the Cold War, those days are long gone. The “special relationship” with the USA that Winston Churchill believed went beyond the terms of the NATO alliance largely existed only in the imagination of Tory leaders and right-wing Labour politicians. Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair liked to pose as partners of Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton, but at the end of the day it was always the Americans who called the shots.

Boris Johnson even wanted to establish “a new special relationship” and a trans-Atlantic free trade zone with the Trump administration. But the Treaty of Washington never happened and Johnson is a forgotten man amongst Trump’s milieu – left speaking to an almost empty room at the Republican national convention last month.

The wind of change that led to the break-up of Britain’s vast colonial empire after the Second World War sharpened the divisions amongst the ruling class between those who believed that the future for British capitalism lies in greater European integration, those who thought British imperial interests were best served through the alliance with the USA, and those who believe that British imperialism can extract the maximum benefit by playing-off one against the other by acting as a trans-Atlantic ‘bridge’ between American imperialism and that of France and Germany. And the latter course was the traditional path of all Labour and Conservative governments from the late 1950s to 1997.

The Tories directly represent the ruling class while the right-wing leaders of social-democracy collaborate with whichever section of the ruling class they believe is the dominant one.

After the 1997 Labour victory Blair put all his bets on the Americans – siding with the most reactionary elements within the British ruling class in the belief that victory in Iraq would give British imperialism a significant slice of the spoils when the “new world order” was established. That dream died on the streets of Baghdad whilst Brexit killed off any hopes of Britain having any sway in the corridors of power in Western Europe.

While key elements within Britain’s ruling circles still want to straddle the Atlantic as the arbiter between US and Franco-German imperialism, the only way they can repair that “bridge” is to restore the UK’s relationship with the European Union. Sir Keir Starmer thinks he can do it through a Brexit ‘reset’ but the Remainers will not rest until they secure the second referendum that they believe will take us back down the road to Brussels...

A British eye on Chinese health

by Leng Shumei

Over 700 years ago, Italian traveller Marco Polo journeyed through China, documenting his experiences and introducing the splendour of ancient China to Europe in his book. Fast forward to the present day, when people discover China through online videos. With China’s visa-free policies and the introduction of 144-hour visa-free transit, a wave of international YouTubers and vloggers have flocked to China.

After exploring gateway cities, where they gain initial insights into China’s modern cityscapes and rich cultural heritage, these YouTubers and vloggers soon turn their attention to localised regions, delving into frontier areas, revolutionary sites and public infrastructure to find the answers to the questions: “What is modern China like, why is it the way it is, and how does it function?”

Through their cameras, they present a real, friendly and vibrant China to the world. They are affectionately referred to by the Chinese as the “Marco Polos” of the New Era. Some vloggers who were impressed by China’s public healthcare services have shared with the world why they like the system and what they think other countries can learn from it.

“China’s healthcare is so bad compared to the USA and the West. That is what I often hear in my YouTube comments but is it true?” a vlogger from the UK, whose channel is called Harvey in China, asks at the beginning

of a video he posted on YouTube.

To clear up any misunderstanding and provide detailed insight into specific aspects of China’s daily life to more people is the reason driving many vloggers such as Harvey to make videos about China’s public healthcare system in recent times amid booming travel to China and a growing curiosity about the country around the world.

According to the latest data revealed at a Chinese State Council press conference on Tuesday, China recorded 5.722 million inbound international passenger trips from January to July, a 403 per cent year-on-year increase. So how is China’s healthcare system and is it convenient for foreigners to see a doctor in China? Check what this vlogger said.

A detailed insight

In the less than 10-minute video, Harvey, who has been living in China for about three years, broke down how much it costs to see a doctor in China, how to make an appointment and what the differences are between China’s public healthcare system and those in the UK and the USA based on his own experiences and comparisons.

In response to the misconception that the healthcare service in China is expensive and only available to rich people, for example, Harvey said that, in a recent visit, he spent 30 yuan or around £3, to see a doctor at a hospital in downtown Shanghai, while the average salary in the city is reportedly about 13,500

yuan per month. “So, spending 30 yuan to be seen by a doctor is affordable to the general population.”

The level of technological integration in China’s public healthcare system also impressed Harvey. “Appointments, prescriptions, [and] even payments can be managed through a single app on the phone. This integration of technology has made the entire process smoother.” Conversely, in the UK, “one still has to call at exactly 8am as soon as the line is open to try and get an appointment to see the doctor.”

“The combination of affordability, accessibility, and technological integration makes China’s healthcare system a model worth considering for other nations while it is not without its challenges... hopefully we can take a thing or two from China’s approach and implement it into our own systems,” Harvey concluded.

Harvey’s video has been watched nearly 18,000 times as of Tuesday. It struck a chord with many viewers who also shared their experiences in the comments of how efficient China’s public healthcare service is.

“I was in China and my daughter got sick. Being a foreign visitor, I was helped by our host to visit a doctor at a small simple clinic. She was attended to in a second, checked, and prescribed a bunch of medication. [It] cost us 15 yuan all in all and in two days my daughter got well. Amazing system,” a YouTube user commented on Harvey’s video.

Global Times



Workers' Notes

The Shape of Things to Come

by New Worker correspondent

In 1997 the Labour Party's election anthem was D:Ream's *Things Can Only Get Better*. On Tuesday, the Prime Minister, Sir 'Kid Starver', lived up to his nickname and delivered a speech that was based upon Noël Coward's *There Are Bad Times Just Around the Corner*.

He warned that the October Budget will be more horrific than Halloween the next day. He gave a clear warning that taxes were going to rise. While he ruled out raising taxes such as VAT, income tax and National Insurance, we do not need a crystal ball to know that he will not be levying any taxes on the huge profits being made by the banks or energy companies.

He could just as easily alter the tax thresholds, which while technically not a rise would bring more people into paying higher rates of taxes, particularly as wages increase.

His recent cuts to millions of pensioners' winter fuel payments at a time of rising energy costs (which he could have prevented by telling the regulator what to do) could easily have been avoided if he took a larger slice of corporate profits, particularly from the energy companies. Starmer's crocodile tears about that decision being "difficult" are not to be taken seriously but his warning that there will be more difficult decisions to come should be. Left unsaid, but perfectly obvious, is the fact that hard choices are not going to affect military spending.

We need not take too seriously Starmer's claim that a newly discovered £22-billion black hole has reluctantly forced his hand. He had already formulated anti-work-

ing-class cuts long before he got his feet under the table.

The labour movement needs to mobilise so that it does not get bogged down with the sort of train drivers versus pensioners arguments the right-wing press is trying to stir up.

Given that Labour is heavily dependent on financial donations from big business, tax increases on those broad shoulders are clearly not going to happen. While inheritance tax could be raised, this only affects the rich who do not like their relatives and is easily avoided by hiring a clever lawyer. Likewise, raising capital gains tax can also be ruled out as it will affect Starmer's new-found supporters.

Further cuts in public services are the most likely outcome and are in line with the bleak tone of Starmer's address. It was telling that the former Prime Minister could only make very minor criticisms about Starmer's vision for the future.

At the time of typing trade union leaders had not said much, with the TUC maintaining a deferential silence. Only Unite's General Secretary Sharon Graham complained that: "Britain is in crisis, yes. But to say there is no money to rebuild our industry and infrastructure, or to restore our public services, is simply not true. The top 50 families have more wealth than half our population. The profit margins of the average British firm have rocketed by 30 per cent since before the pandemic. If we taxed one per cent on the wealthiest one per cent, the so-called black hole would be gone." Ms Graham sounded surprised – but anything like that clearly never was on Starmer's agenda.

That's Entertainment!

by New Worker correspondent

The Musicians' Union (MU) has recently announced it has now got a membership of 35,000, a healthy density

as there are 43,300 professional musicians in Britain, although it failed to mention its peak membership was 40,000 in 1990.

In addition to normal trade union pay and conditions bargaining matters, the union provides specialist benefits such as instrument and equipment insurance, Public Liability Insurance and a Contract Advisory Service. Ever since the invention of the wax cylinder musicians have had difficulties receiving payments for repeats of their work. Securing these in the digital age is a major part of the MU's work.

The MU began in Manchester in 1893 when a Manchester Musicians' Union was founded by 20 musicians who soon spread their geographical wings to Britain's major cities becoming the Amalgamated Musicians Union (AMU) except in London, where the London Orchestral Association was started around the same time.

Its roots were in the then thriving music halls, but it aimed to recruit classical musician and others, although in the 1960s members had mixed views about letting in long-haired pop singers.

Establishing a closed shop was essential for the success of the AMU. When theatres had orchestras to provide background music as well as concerts there were plenty of amateur and moonlighting military bandmen for professional musicians to contend with. The AMU took care to work with other music hall workers such as stagehands. From an early date it became involved with municipal politics and trades councils to ensure licensing of entertainment venues was conditional on the provision of fair wages and conditions.

In 1907 a successful strike in the London music halls tripled the then 3,000-strong membership. This put it in a strong enough position to launch court cases against troublesome theatre owners and enforced discipline against members undercutting their colleagues. A grim example of its strength was filling the Albert Hall for a memorial concert for the members who

played as the Titanic went down.

At Queen Victoria's 1897 jubilee the union objected to a Hungarian band playing at the celebrations and managed to persuade the Government to ban all foreign musicians from playing unless they had been a resident in the country for two years. These rules later affected visiting American jazz musicians. They in turn were strongly opposed to foreign musicians coming to the USA.

In the 1950s it successfully fought against the colour bar imposed at many British venues by banning its members from working there, and it was an early supporter of boycotts against the apartheid regime by preventing members taking up contracts in South Africa. At present it has been moaning about Brexit because of the restrictions the European Union now places on visiting British musicians because of EU spite.

The MU has always had a problem with many potential members thinking they are artistes and are reluctant to see themselves as workers. To make things worse, some of its more successful members depart once they have collected few gongs.

In 1921 the MU took its present shape as a result of merging with its London rival. The establishment of the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) the following year was welcomed by those lucky enough to be employed by the high-minded in its regional and specialist orchestras, which for the first time provided annual contracts with fixed hours and paid holidays.

The end of silent films caused unemployment for musicians, which was only partially offset by the popularity of dance halls as they also used gramophone records.

It failed to ban recordings in cinemas and instead established a partnership with the major record companies to share royalties, an arrangement which still manages to survive today. Thus, the MU has for better or worse a very close relationship with entertainment multinationals.

After the Second World War sales of LPs, as gramo-

phone records became known, became the main measure of success for individual performers and groups. Live performances and tours were the reward for recordings rather than the previous journey from the music hall to recording studio. In the 1980s the MU fought a rearguard action to save some BBC orchestras. Since 1965 the MU had used the defensive slogan of "Keep Music Live" in many battles.

The MU finds it difficult to keep all its members happy. In 2013 it started a "Work Not Play Campaign" to oppose the public house tradition of allowing musicians to play without payment from the host, forcing them to rely on tips. Some of its members objected however, as many landlords will simply not hire musicians if they have to pay them.

In 2022 the MU elected a new General Secretary after the NEC attempted to extend the incumbent's term for another two years. After lawyers had been enriched, an election was held resulting in a long-term MU official, Naomi Pohl, becoming the first woman to hold the post.

Present Battles

The MU is presently helping to oppose the cuts to Creative Scotland. More draconian cuts are being opposed by the MU in Wales where, as part of drastic cuts to the Arts Council of Wales, the Welsh National Opera (WNO) is planning to cut wages by 15 per cent and make its orchestra part-time. It will no longer be able to undertake any tours if the cuts go ahead. It is an easy target for cuts as not many operas are in Welsh. MU and Equity members are presently balloting for strike action.

Another ongoing MU campaign takes on the mighty BBC to preserve a live band on the BBC's notorious *Strictly Come Dancing* programme. It complains that it has halved the normal number of live musicians. This was done as part of COVID-19 social-distancing measures but now remains

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in place.

Negotiations have persuaded the BBC to retain the full band for four episodes from a previous total of 14 episodes, but the Corporation refuses to reinstate the full live band across the full series.

This means a huge loss of earnings to musicians who played live on the show for 16 years prior to the pandemic.

General Secretary Naomi Pohl said: "The *Strictly* band is extremely popular with the show's fans, and we know it's always better for dancers to perform with live musicians than a recording. A fully live band can respond to what happens on the show, better supporting the production and the dancers."

She adds that: "There are very few shows on television with a house band now and we don't accept that *Strictly Come Dancing*, of all programmes, needs to cut corners in this way. The compromise of restoring the full band to some episodes didn't go far enough."

Geoff Ellerby, the union's National Organiser for Recording & Broadcasting, said: "Given it remains the BBC's flagship entertainment show, and the very nature of the show has always been based on music and dance, this is a deeply disappointing move,

and one we can't accept. Due to clever camera work by the production team, it may not have been obvious to viewers until now that the on-screen band has been reduced. We hope fans of the show will join our call to restore the full band of musicians to the production."

This story can be repeated on many other occasions. One such is the present campaign to "Keep Northern Ballet Live!". The Leeds-based ballet company has already cut touring work due to funding cuts and is planning to cut more musicians' jobs and replace them with recordings. MU members are already on freelance contracts and some are already using foodbanks to survive as funding has not changed since 2015, a period of high inflation.

Apart from saving jobs, saving venues is also on the agenda. The latest such beneficiary of a battle involving the MU is the Oldham Coliseum Theatre, which is now set to reopen late next year after a successful local campaign that persuaded the local council to pledge £10 million for refurbishment.

Paul Reed, the MU's Regional Organiser for the North of England, paid tribute to those who came together, saying: "We applaud the efforts of our sister unions, alumni and local residents in

banding together to secure the re-opening of Oldham Coliseum Theatre."

The Realities of 'Resting'

Another entertainment union is BECTU, which represents those working behind the scenes. It has about 40,000 members working (and often not) in live events, broadcasting, film and cinema, digital media, independent production, leisure, theatre and the arts. Many of these are freelance workers, which means the union has to help sort out literally thousands of individual contracts. It is however the largest union in the BBC.

It is now a section of Prospect, the high-caste civil service union, with which it has had a sometimes difficult relationship in the past.

Like many in the entertainment business, its members are often what actors call 'resting'. A BECTU survey of its members carried out in July found that 52 per cent of them were out of work with over a third of them planning to leave the business entirely.

Depressingly this 52 per cent was better than the 68 recorded in February. This was due to the scriptwriters strike in America last year, which

had a considerable knock-on effect in the UK where a lot of production work is done because the natives speak English and are cheaper than in California.

Only six per cent said they had experienced a full recovery in employment, with a fifth getting into debt or being unable to pay their bills as a result.

The survey quoted a costume cutter who lamented that: "The LA strikes have had such a brutal impact on so many of us here in the UK. I would never have imagined that I would be still out of work 14 months later. We were definitely unprepared for the long haul." A series producer added: "I have never struggled to find work like this in 25 years. I've had nothing at all in seven months. I feel used and discarded."

A clapper loader com-

plained that: "The industry is an absolute shambles and that's an understatement. Very few of us had furlough during COVID, with only universal credit. This second setback is beyond crippling – every month people are saying it's going to get better but we are all still waiting. We have fantastic creative talent that is going to waste."

BECTU chief, Philippa Childs, noted that: "Clearly, little has materially improved for the workforce and these discussions must be laser focused on how we can collectively make things better for workers, who are critical to the sector's success but continue to bear the brunt of industry changes."

Many of the issues affecting the MU and BECTU also involve members of the actors' union Equity. We hope to focus on them soon.

CONTACT US...

Post: NCP, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, UK

Phone: 07497 393 263

New Worker National: www.newworker.org

email: party@ncp.clara.net

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

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

27th August 2004

Nepalese rebels have lifted their siege of Kathmandu after a week-long economic blockade that had virtually paralysed the capital of the Himalayan kingdom.

A joint statement issued by the six organisations affiliated to the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (CPN-M) said that the indefinite blockade imposed since 18th August would be lifted for a month from Wednesday.

The blockade brought all economic life to a standstill in Kathmandu. All roads in and out of the city were

sealed and shops, businesses and hotels were forced to close following warnings from supporters of the CPN-M inside the city.

American imperialism has condemned the growing violence and urged the rebels to give up the gun. "The US firmly rejects the Maoist intimidation, terrorism and threats of violence against civilians," State Department deputy spokesman Adam Ereli said last week.

This followed the bombing of a luxury hotel in Kathmandu as well as "Maoist intimidation efforts" against Nepali businesses, which Ereli dubbed "reprehensible acts".

"These" Ereli said, "only undermine Nepal's economic, political and social development and demonstrate a clear disregard for the well-being of the Nepali people."

He called upon the Maoist rebels to abandon violence and to resolve their grievances through peaceful and political means. But two previous efforts to end the fighting, supported by the democratic parliamentary parties including the Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) have broken down to the intransigence of the royal

family.

Nepal has been in permanent crisis since June 2001 when King Birendra and his closest relations were massacred by Crown Prince Dipendra, who then shot himself. The throne then passed to the uncle, Gyanendra, the current king. A ceasefire with the rebels broke down in November 2001 and a state emergency was proclaimed. In October 2002 the king sacked the Prime Minister and since then has ruled as a tyrant.

The Maoists control about two-thirds of the country but none of the major towns and cities. Some 10,000 people have been killed in the conflict that began in 1996 and continues today as the guerillas struggle against the forces of the monarchy. The guerillas are fighting to overthrow the king and end the centuries-old held feudal system of oppression.

The royal government is now talking about a new dialogue to end the conflict but all previous attempts have failed because the monarchy is not prepared to meet the Maoist demands for a constituent assembly to write a new constitution.

Every Place in Gaza is a Target

by Vijay Prashad

It is almost as if the Israeli army is trying to gather as many Palestinians as possible in one place and then kill them all. Ahmed Abed and his family fled the Dalal al-Maghribi school in early August after an Israeli airstrike displaced them. That airstrike killed 15 Palestinians, who had taken refuge there after Israel had bombed their homes in the Shujaiyah neighbourhood of Gaza City. The family arrived in the al-Taba'een school, a private school with an attached mosque, which sheltered 2,500 people. Since the Israelis began their most recent bombardment of Gaza in October 2023, Palestinians have taken refuge in private schools and in schools run by the United Nations. The UN reports that in the Gaza Strip, the Israeli attacks have damaged 190 of their facilities, most of them schools. There are few sanctuaries left in Gaza. These schools – whether private or UN – are the only places that were seen as relatively safe.

At 4:30am on 10th August Israeli jet fighters flew over Gaza City and dropped American-made GBU-39 250-pound bombs on the al-Taba'een school and mosque. During that time, many of the inhabitants had lined up at the mosque to go for the Fajr or dawn prayer. The bombs hit the people near the mosque, killing at least 100 Palestinians. It is a grotesque massacre that took place just when the USA decided to rearm Israel with these kinds of weapons. Sarah Leah Whitson, former Middle East director for Human Rights Watch, wrote that the arms sales to Israel by the USA on the day of this bombardment demonstrated a “Pavlovian conditioning for a feral army”.

The USA, despite occasional statements about withholding weapons, has consistently armed Israel during this genocidal war.



• Another victim of Zionist terror.

Since 1948, the USA has provided 130 billion dollars' worth of weapons to Israel. Between 2018 and 2022, 79 per cent of all weapons sold to Israel came from the USA (the next was Germany, which supplied 20 per cent of Israel's arms imports). These arms sales have come in deliberately small bunches of under 25 million dollars per sale so that they do not require the scrutiny of the US Congress and therefore public debate. Until March, the USA approved a hundred of these small sales since October 2023, which amount to over 1 billion dollars in weapons sales, including the GBU-39. It is important to know that the bomb, created in the USA, was likely loaded onto an Israeli fighter jet by a US technician seconded to the Israeli bases.

Targeting schools

Mahmoud Basal, the spokesperson for Gaza's civil defence unit, said that the medics who got to the scene at al-Taba'een school, many of them already veterans of this kind of violence, were confounded by what they found. “The school area is strewn with dead bodies and body parts,” he said. “It is very difficult for paramedics to identify a whole dead body. There's an arm here, a leg there. Bodies are ripped to pieces. Medical teams stand help-

less before this horrific scene.” At least 40,000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli bombings since last October, and two million Palestinians have been displaced from their homes.

In the lead-up to the attack on al-Taba'een school, the Israeli forces have been escalating their bombings of schools in Gaza that serve as shelters. In July, the Israeli military struck 17 schools in Gaza, killing at least 163 Palestinians. In the week preceding 10th August, Israel hit the Khadija and Ahmad al-Kurd schools in Deir al-Balah killing 30 Palestinians (27th July), the Dalal Moghrabi school in Shujaiyah killing 15 Palestinians (1st August), the Hamama and Huda schools in Sheikh Radwan killing 16 Palestinians (3rd August), the Hassan Salame and Nasser schools in an-Nassr killing 25 Palestinians (4th August), and the al-Zahraa and Abdul Fattah Hamouda schools killing 17 Palestinians (8th August).

This sequence of attacks on schools came before the 10th August bombing, which shows that there is a pattern of targeting civilians who are seeking shelter in schools. The massacre at al-Taba'een is the 21st attack by Israel against a school that is serving as a shelter since 4th July. Ahmed Abed lost his brother-in-law Abdullah al-Arair in the massacre at al-Taba'een. “There is nowhere else to go,” he said. “Every place in Gaza is a target.”

Zionist denials

Israel accepted that it has bombed these schools but denies that it killed civilians. In fact, Israel no longer names these places such as al-Taba'een and Dalal Moghrabi as schools, it calls them “military facilities”. The Israeli military said that it had killed at least 20 “terror operatives” since it claims to have hit an “active Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad command room embedded within a mosque”. The Israeli authorities released names of at least 19 people who they claimed were senior operatives of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

The Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor, an independent organisation based in Switzerland, studied the claims made by Israel's military and found them to be factually wanting. The Monitor's staff went to the school, did a survey of the survivors and reviewed the Israeli-controlled civil registry for the names. The team's “preliminary investigation found that the Israeli army used names of Palestinians killed in the Israeli raid – some of whom were killed in earlier raids – in its list”. The three people killed earlier, but whose names appeared in the Israeli lists, include Ahmed Ihab al-Jaabari (killed on 5th December 2023), Youssef al-Wadiyya (killed on 8th August 2024) and Montaser Daher (killed on 9th August 2024). The Israeli list

also had three elderly civilians who have no connection to any militant group, including Abdul Aziz Misbah al-Kafarna (a school principal) and Yousef Kahlout (an Arabic language teacher and deputy mayor of Beit Hanoun). The list also includes six civilians, “some of whom were even Hamas opponents”.

It is remarkable that even in their own statements the Israeli officials seem unsure about their own claims. Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari of the Israeli military said that “various intelligence indications” show that there was a “high probability” that Ashraf Juda, a commander of the Islamic Jihad's Central Camps Brigade, was in al-Taba'een school. But the Israelis could not confirm it. So, the Israelis killed 100 civilians even though they were not certain if their target was in the facility at that time.

The Israeli army has set up a pattern for its genocidal campaign. It first bombs civilian neighbourhoods, sending terrified people into shelters such as schools and hospitals. Then, it announces blanket evacuation orders from an entire area, forcing people in these shelters to live in fear since many of them do not have the wherewithal to leave them for other places (indeed, “there is nowhere else to go”, said Ahmed Abed). Having made these evacuation orders, Israel then bombs the protected shelters, including hospitals and schools, with the argument that these are military targets. This formula was enacted in Gaza City, and in other parts of Gaza.

Now, Israel has announced forced evacuation orders for people in Khan Younis, the city in central Gaza. Alongside these orders, Israeli forces have begun aerial and artillery attacks at the eastern edge of Khan Younis. We will now see these kinds of attacks on schools and hospitals that are shelters for desperate people in the centre of Gaza, every building seen by the Israelis as a legitimate target.

People's Democracy
(India)

Ukrainians flee to avoid conscription

by Alex Miller

Large-scale military defeats, a high number of losses, an acute shortage of weapons, the complete absence of social benefits. These days most Ukrainians have lost their patriotic zeal. Guided by a common instinct of self-preservation and fear of serious injury or unwanted death they are not ready to sacrifice themselves.

The new Ukrainian law on military mobilisation further aggravates the situation with conscription into the army. Numerous attempts by the government to straighten out the mobilisation process have generally failed. Territorial Recruiting Centres (known as TCK) cannot meet the

government's recruitment needs.

According to the Belgian newspaper *Politico*, more than 650,000 Ukrainian men fit for service have fled from the country. The actual statis-

tical figures, however, are much higher.

The London *Guardian* on 29th June 2024 reported persistent attempts by Ukrainians liable for military service to escape and leave Ukraine in order to avoid conscription. The publisher cited legal inconsistencies and a ban on leaving Ukraine for all men between 25 and 60 years old, and said thousands of men are fleeing Ukraine by crossing the border illegally. These men do not want to share the tragic fate of hundreds of thousands of their compatriots who died on the battlefield or were seriously injured.

According to the Commander-in-Chief of the Border Guards of Ukraine – I Matveychuk – every day more than 100 men of military age try to illegally cross the border to get into Western Europe. At the same time, reservists who stay behind are doing all sorts of things to avoid being recalled to the armed forces. They illegally ignore military registration and enlistment offices and document checks. They steer clear of public places (such as retail stores, shops, markets and cultural

events), avoid open movement on the streets and hide their location and change their addresses to avoid official employment.

The American publishing house Bloomberg reports that many men have changed their actual place of residence and it is impossible to find them. Only half of the 4.5 million relocated men were officially registered for a change of address.

Since the beginning of the military conflict, the TCK call-up centres have filed more than 180,000 administrative reports for violation of military registration, and also submitted more than 400,000 requests to regional police departments to search for military service evaders.

At the same time, the failure of the mobilisation campaign in Ukraine has led to an acute shortage of military personnel, which daily increases the risk of the front collapsing along the line from the city of Kherson to the city of Kharkov.

The French radio station Europe 1, citing the source in the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, reported that the

personnel shortage in the Ukrainian army exceeded 40 per cent of the actual figures of the officially stated need.

The top commanders of the Armed Forces of Ukraine do not hide the bleak picture and in their belligerent statements they are trying to encourage the political leadership urgently to change the situation. General Yuri Sodomol, the former Commander-in-Chief of the Ukrainian Armed Forces, in a speech in the Ukrainian Parliament (Verkhovna Rada), raised the issue of more than 10-fold numerical superiority of Russian personnel over the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Finding itself in a desperate situation, the Kiev regime is forced to fill the acute personnel shortage by starting the total mobilisation of all men previously exempted from conscription, including those with foreign and dual citizenship. Now the TCK enlistment centres have started a man-hunt for more than 100,000 men of military age with dual citizenship and passports of other countries, permanently or temporarily residing

on the territory of Ukraine.

The Israeli Embassy in Kiev reported an increase in the number of cases of detention of people with dual citizenship attempting to leave Ukraine. Tel-Aviv has officially recommended that Israelis holding dual Ukrainian citizenship avoid travelling to Ukraine.

A similar message was distributed by the US diplomatic mission in Ukraine. In a statement, the US diplomatic agency said that as of 1st June 2024, the official moratorium on the mobilisation of residents who have lived outside Ukraine for a long time and have passports of another citizenship has been terminated while emphasising that Washington is limited in its ability to change Ukrainian legislation that regulates military status and mobilisation process in Ukraine.

In addition, on 5th June 2024 Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, announced, that the government of Ukraine is calling up members of the Hungarian community who have dual Ukrainian and Hungarian citizenship. Now "Hungary is the only European country whose citizens officially serve in the Ukrainian army and die in war" he said.



• Knocked-out Ukrainian tank on the Kursk front.

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China: the key to global progress

by Einar Tangen

China's contribution to the world has two distinct phases. In the past, China contributed to the world by inventing paper, after which books, kites and paper money were possible. It pioneered iron and bronze production, allowing the creation of seed drills, row planting, movable type, the compass, mechanical clocks and earthquake detectors. Gunpowder changed the military balance of power, while tea, porcelain and traditional Chinese medicine altered how people lived. Intellectually, a variety of influences, including Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, influenced the way people thought.

The opening up policy of the late 1970s was embraced because China needed to learn if it was going to rejuvenate the country and signalled the second phase of the country's major contributions to the world. Between the late 1970s and 2000, China was a student, its best and the brightest venturing abroad to seek knowledge and understand the modern world.

Between 2000 and 2010, China transitioned from student to partner, contributing through joint research and development programmes to the understanding of particle physics with scientists such as the Nobel laureate Tsung-Dao Lee and the "First Lady of Physics" Wu Chien-Shiung.

Since 2010, China, while still learning, has become an innovator and teacher. It now leads the world in research pub-



• By the Suzhou river in Shanghai.

lications recognised as high quality and produces many more engineers than the USA. By all measures, research spending in China is soaring.

In March 2023, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) stated that China is leading in 37 of 44 critical or emerging technologies.

China has accomplished this by creating research institutions, investing in research and development, and relying on the hard work and competitive forces that have taken it to the forefront of applied technology in consumer-driven markets such as mobile phones and appliances. It has also established economic and technological development zones, industry clusters and joint ventures that quickly move innovations from the mind to the consumer.

In medicine, China's researchers and doctors moved from learning to mastering and teaching microsurgery, developing carbon ion therapy, implantable left ventricular

assists, implantable sacral nerve stimulation, endoscopic single-site surgery systems, and the rapid genome sequencing and development of multiple COVID-19 vaccines.

In communications, the inexpensive mobile phones powering the economies of developing nations; 5G and 6G, cloud computing, electronic mobile payments systems, IoT [Internet of Things] and sensors, continue to change the way the world accesses, uses, orders and pays for information.

In engineering, the rapid and cost-effective transformation of China and other countries through infrastructure projects that link and empower people and countries, has created opportunities allowing developing nations to outgrow the developed nations that once controlled them.

On a human scale, China's scientific advancements have been and continue to be shared through various government programmes, such as eradicating extreme poverty

and expanding the safety net in terms of health and pensions. The systems that support these projects have been developed over years, involving social credit score systems that identify those who engage in fraud and rewards those who do not.

Unfortunately, China's advancement is seen by the USA as a threat to its dominance and hegemony – a dominance long maintained by hoarding scientific and technological developments, while seeking often exorbitant rents.

In 2018, the Trump administration rolled out its "China Initiative", signalling the end of an era of open learning and co-operation not only between the USA and China, but the entire world. The Biden administration has continued along the same trajectory, with failed prosecutions of Chinese scientists, and restrictions on finance, technology, companies and individuals, repeating daily the mantra of the China security threat.

Since 2018, joint pub-

lications have dropped in overall numbers worldwide, Chinese academics are less willing to come to America, and Chinese researchers in the USA are increasingly likely to return home. In 2023, the number of joint research papers between American and Chinese scientists dropped for the first time in three decades. At a time when

science is sorely needed to solve climate, energy and health issues, the USA is shutting the door to China and the rest of the world.

On the question of whether you should control or share knowledge, on one side are politicians who know little about science and believe it should be controlled, while on the other side is the vast majority of scientists who understand that it needs to be shared.

In 2014, Francis Collins, president of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), speaking at Fudan University in Shanghai, said: "Science has no borders because knowledge belongs to all humankind."

China has now graduated and will continue to learn and share, contributing to a world of shared values and progress – the only question is will it be met with more resistance or embraced? As one door on the American side closes, China's door continues to open wider.

Global Times

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LETTERS

Dear Comrades

It is essential to encourage a greater awareness and involvement of the working class in political struggle. A key concern for most people is how to pay their bills. It is important therefore, to raise more prominently those economic issues that affect our daily lives and to explain the links between money matters and the political aspects of the class struggle. It is in this way that the uneven distribution of wealth may be highlighted with the opportunity to expose corruption and warmongering.

The shocking reality today between the cuts in social spending while increasing the military budget, at the behest of the USA and NATO, is a disgrace. No major power would have any reason or interest in attacking Britain – unless we attack them first. The British public have been conditioned to support a military build-up by a constant barrage of lies and propaganda by the mass media. An action that is both unaffordable and unnecessary.

Imperialism does not publicise the fact that it is in its terminal crisis. It would like us to believe that all our problems are caused by others: Russia, China, Iran, high wages, lazy workers and unaffordable pensions. Let's briefly examine a few fallacies:

- **China's exports are destroying jobs:** China has a vast and expanding market that offers unprecedented opportunities for export. Britain should invest in high technology

production, improve its infrastructure and raise skill levels. This essential process could be assisted by cooperation with China.

- **Inflation is caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine:** The tragic civil war was started by a Western-backed coup in 2014 in which the democratically elected president was forced to flee. Russia's special military operation was launched to protect the Russian-speaking people of Eastern Ukraine. Inflation has been greatly influenced following Western involvement in blowing-up the Nord Stream natural gas pipelines.

- **Britain must increase military support to its friends in the Middle East in view of threats from Iran:** Israel, whom the West supports, is the villain in the region. Iran has a principled foreign policy and does not commit daily aggression against its neighbours.

- **Strikes and excessive wage demands have crippled British industry:** In fact, the real value of wages has fallen dramatically for many since the 2008 financial crisis.

**John Maryon
Suffolk**

Dear Comrades

Zelensky cannot hold the ground that he takes in Russia but NATO can. This foray into Russia is an act of blackmail on the part of the Nazis in Ukraine, against NATO and their allies. In the same way as Farage blackmails the Tories, and Bardella-LeP-

en blackmail Macron in France. The conventional conservatives must kneel in front of the Nazis, or else the Nazis will use relations with Russian oligarchs (or similar) to bring the conventional conservatives to their knees.

In other words, the move to the right is inexorable and written in the DNA of capitalism. Just another reason for the scientific mind to conclude that one cannot avoid the confrontation between capitalism and socialism. Indeed, one should not. But one must organise to win it – just as they did in 1943.

We are back at 1943, but bigger. This time it needs the return of the Communist International (that was then no longer functioning for no reason whatsoever). One must return to the partisans everywhere, but particularly in Europe. I reckon some sort of International is soon to be created. It will be done very fast, when war is clearly imminent.

**Marie Lynam
London**

Dear Friends

Schools, refugee camps, and a busy market have all this week been considered legitimate targets for Israel's unrelenting war machine. Palestinians are facing bombardment from the air, shooting from the sea, and shelling on the ground with images of burned and decapitated children becoming a regular occurrence on our social media feeds.

In the face of such unrelenting brutality we cannot afford to allow our voices to be quietened. Join us on Saturday 7th September at 12 noon in Central London as we march once again to call for action to bring pressure to secure an immediate and permanent ceasefire, including a ban on all arms sales to Israel.

Join us for our following national march where

we will be taking our demands directly to the Labour Government at their party conference in Liverpool at 12 noon on Saturday 21st September.

Over 40,000 Palestinians have now been killed in Israel's genocide. The supposed 'safe zones' are facing repeated attacks and evacuation orders are forcing already displaced civilians into increasingly overcrowded and uninhabitable shelters.

And now, the people of Gaza are on the brink of another crisis. Polio has returned for the first time in 25 years, posing an unimaginable threat of paralysis and death to all of Gaza's children. Its outbreak in Gaza is a direct result of Israel's destruction of Gaza's health and sanitation infrastructure.

Forty agencies and medical professionals from around the world, including Save the Children, have called for an immediate ceasefire to allow for the vaccination of Gaza's children, and yet Israel's bombing still continues.

President Biden's face-saving claims of a ceasefire deal being close ring hollow when Netanyahu repeats time and again his unwillingness to end his genocidal assault on the people of Gaza. Will you join us on Saturday 7th September to tell the world that warm words are not enough and that we need a ceasefire NOW?

Despite claims during the election campaign of being a break from the past, our Labour government has not taken any real practical steps to end the UK's complicity in Israel's genocide. We continue to sell arms to Israel, and we continue to provide political cover for their daily war crimes.

Our politicians must know that they cannot hide from accountability for their complicity or run away from their obligations

continued on page 9...

Diary

Check the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop the War Coalition websites for emergency Gaza protests across the country.

UNTIL SUN 15 SEPT

London School of Economics: A Say in the End of the World: Solidarity and Nuclear Defence in the Cold War. Exhibition, LSE Library, 10 Portugal Street, London, WC2 2HD.

SUN 1 SEPT

Burston Strike School Rally, 10:30–16:00 Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk IP22.

SUN 1 SEPT

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: *Lucia*, 1968 Cuban film, 13:45 Hyde Park Picture House, 73 Brudenell Road, Leeds, LS6 1JD.

SUN 1 SEPT

Caribbean Labour Solidarity: Melinda Janki on Guyana's oil – boom or blowout? 14:00, Online discussion. Book in advance on CLS website.

TUE 3 SEPT–TUE 22 OCT

Marx Memorial Library: Trade Unions, Class and Power. Online eight-week course. Book on MML website.

FRI 6 SEPT–10 OCT

10 TO 4 Productions: *Cable Street: A New Musical*. Southwark Playhouse Elephant, 1 Dante Place, London SE11 4RX.

SAT 7 SEPT

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Stop Arming Israel. National Demonstration, London. Details TBA.

SAT 7 SEPT

Joseph Arch Day: Lecture by James Crossley, 14:00, St Peter's Church, Barford Warwickshire, CV35 8ES.

SAT 7 SEPT

Wigan Diggers Festival. 11:30–21:30. Open-air free festival, The Wiend, Wigan WN1.

MON 9 SEPT

Earth Theatre, Rev Munther Isaac of Bethlehem in Conversation about Palestine. 18:00, 11–17 Stoke Newington Rd, London N16 8BH.

THUR 12 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: That Devil Wilkes. 18:30, In person, MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU.

SUN 15 SEPT

Scottish Morning Star Conference, Scottish TUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP.

SUN 15 SEPT

TUC Midlands: Women chain-makers' festival celebrating the 1910 strike. 11:00–17:30, Mary McArthur Gardens, Cradley Heath B64 5BA.

MON 16 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Online taster session on Marx and Marxism. 19:00–20:00. Details TBA.

WED 18 SEPT

Birkbeck College: Anti-racism and anti-semitism seminar. 10:00–18:00, Birkbeck Clow Management Centre, 27 Tor-

ington Square, London WC1E 7JL. Book on Birkbeck website.

WED 18 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Michael Roberts on The Long Depression and the Tepid Twenties. 19:00, Online and in person. Book on MML website.

SAT 21 DEC

Hope not Hate: International Brigade commemoration. 10:30, La Passionara memorial, 286 Clyde St, Glasgow G1 4AL.

SUN 22 SEPT

Calton Weavers Memorial Committee: Commemoration of 1787 strike, 13:00, Calton Burial Ground, Abercromby Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 2DD.

MON 23 SEPT

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: End the Blockade on Health, 18:00, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool, L1 9BP.

MON 23 SEPT

Labour Friends of Progressive Latin America: Viva la Solidaridad! Stand with Latin America's Left. 18:30–20:00, Racquet Club Hotel & Ziba Restaurant, 5 Chapel Street, Liverpool L3 9AG. Register on Eventbrite.

TUES 24 SEPT

Socialist History Society: Ariel Hessayon on The World of the Ranters Revisited. Online lecture. 19:00, Register on SHS website.

WED 25 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Exhibition launch: People & Protest: Radical Clerkenwell Reinterpreted. 17:00, at Library.

THUR 26 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Costas Lapavistas on Contesting the Rise of the Far Right in Europe. 19:00, In person and online. Register on MML website.

THUR 26 SEPT ONWARDS

Townsend Theatre Productions: *Behold Ye Ramblers*. Touring play by Neil Gore. See TTP website for details.

SAT 28 SEPT

Fife Trades Union Council: Commemoration of Fife's International Brigade volunteers. 11:00, memorial stone on Forth Avenue, Kirkcaldy KY2 5PR.

SAT 28 SEPT

Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Vigil in opposition to the US blockade of Cuba. 1:00–1:45, Argyle Street, Glasgow G2 8AA.

SAT 28 SEPT

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Vigil against US nuclear weapons returning to Britain. 12:00–14:00, RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath, Brandon, Suffolk, IP27 9PS.

SAT 28 SEPT

Stand Up To Racism: Stop the Far Right. No nazis in London. National demonstration. 12:00, Central London. Details TBA.

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...continued from page 8

under international law. We need to show them that we are not going away until we have a ceasefire, and an end to all UK complicity with Israel's system of apartheid, beginning with an immediate ban on all arms sales to Israel.

Can you help us take these demands directly to the Labour Government at their party conference in Liverpool on Saturday 21st September?

In the darkest hours for the Palestinian people, the solidarity of those who have marched and campaigned across the world has been a shining light.

From London to Liverpool our message is clear – we will never stop campaigning until Palestine is free.

Simon Foster
Deputy Director
Palestine Solidarity Campaign
London

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

The SNP joined in the chorus condemning Labour's decision to cut the winter fuel payment for most pensioners this week. Keith Brown, the SNP's deputy leader called the Scottish Labour

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leader “spineless” for not condemning Sir Keir Starmer’s decision to restrict the winter fuel payment. Brown said Labour has made the “political choice to continue with Tory austerity” while Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar was “powerless” in standing up to his party’s leadership.

“Despite election promises, Labour has made the political choice to continue with Tory austerity – hitting the most vulnerable in our society hardest by scrapping the universal winter fuel payment and refusing to get rid of the cruel two-child benefit cap.

“Anas Sarwar, and his deputy Jackie Baillie, who previously said she would fight to protect the universal payment, have been spineless in their refusal to criticise the decision.

“Labour in Scotland are willing to roll over and go along with whatever their London bosses tell them. Despite his election rhetoric, Sarwar is clearly powerless to stand up to yet more austerity and cuts to benefits and public services.

“It should never be the case that pensioners in a country as energy rich as Scotland are forced to bear the brunt of spending decisions taken at Westminster.”

Meanwhile at Holyrood...

...the SNP in government are having to make hard choices that are going to further reduce their support unless they manage to blame the Chancellor of the Exchequer for their troubles.

One such was the discovery that the money to fund the local government workers’ recent

pay deals is partly going to come out of the £29.2 million Nature Restoration Fund. This fund is split between councils and the Nature Scot agency. Some £5 million will be taken from the Nature fund’s coffers but the Scottish government say it will be replaced next year.

This hasn’t gone down well with the outdoor community. World Wildlife Fund Scotland director Lang Banks complained that “it’s extremely frustrating when the small amounts of money which are allocated to climate and nature action come under further pressure”, and RSPB Scotland’s director, Anne McCall, said: “Recently published analysis has shown that funding for nature needs to increase, not be cut. Scotland is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world, coming 28th from the bottom of 240, and this trend is continuing... the short- and long-term consequences of this action will be keenly felt both now and into the future.”

The Scottish Tories’ rural affairs spokesperson Rachael Hamilton denounced the SNP’s move, saying: “Nature should not be a trivial consideration for the SNP, as this would suggest.” Quite right too, but the Tories would probably want to see all that £29.2 million devoted to protecting their grouse moors.

Arts funding is another area where the SNP is making cuts. Creative Scotland is shutting down applications for its open fund for individual artists. This could be riskier for the SNP, as unlike red squirrels and the elusive puffins, artists are direct beneficiaries of Creative Scotland and losers have votes. Even Val McDermid, the crime novelist

and best buddy to Nicola Sturgeon, has denounced these cuts. She fumed: “This is disgraceful. The culture sector earns not just hard cash but respect and admiration, at home and abroad. What else is this government going to dismiss as worthless?”

The latest cuts come after £13.2 million was restored to Creative Scotland’s budget after cuts made last year. So long-term planning is conspicuous by its absence. The new Scottish national poet, Kathleen Jamie, said: “This is Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government at their worst.”

Finally, in a Labour move designed to annoy the SNP, the Scotland Office under Scottish Secretary Ian Murray is to get £150 million to spend north of the border without regard to Holyrood. Anti-poverty measures administered by local authorities will be the main beneficiaries. It is claimed that “there has clearly been a degree of incompetence within the Scottish Government and this legislation will allow the Scotland Office to invest directly where it sees fit rather than getting bogged down in bureaucracy”.

At the Parish Pump

It is a while since we paid attention to local government by-elections.

One such took place on the 4th July and so understandably got forgotten about. This was in Na Hearadh ward of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Harris in the Western Isles). Following the resignation of an Independent, a two-way contest between another Independent and the Scottish Family Party saw the Independent triumph 95.4 to 4.6 per

cent on a 63 per cent turnout. They do things differently in the Western Isles.

A fortnight later a miracle occurred: the SNP actually won a by-election in the Kintyre & the Islands ward of Argyll and Bute caused by the death of a long-serving Liberal-Democrat councillor. On a 31 per cent turnout, the SNP defeated the Tory and a former councillor standing as Independent who almost tied on the second count, with the incumbent party in fourth place.

But it was back to normal in August for the two latest contests. Both had low turnouts of just over 20 per cent and saw Labour victories.

First at the posh Dunblane & Bridge of Allan ward (a common venue for by-elections) of Stirling Council. The fact that the contest was caused by the incumbent Labour councillor being jailed for child pornography offences should have been an open goal for the SNP. Instead, they fell from second to third place behind the Tories.

Finally, in West Lothian’s Armadale & Blackridge ward another Independent’s death saw Labour narrowly win over the SNP. In this seat the Faragist Reform party did unusually well securing third place and 18 per cent of the first preference votes, and the small Independence for Scotland Party beat the Tories into fifth place. This was a better than Alex Salmond’s Alba has ever achieved.

September and coming months will see several more contests, some caused by councillors getting promotion to Westminster. These will let us know when the Starmer honeymoon ends and who benefits from the inevitable fall-out.

Blair was warned over NATO war crimes

by John Miles

As NATO aggression in the former Yugoslavia fully unmasked the alliance as a tool of Western imperialism, newly-released documents reveal that controversial former Prime Minister Tony Blair was warned of the possible legal consequences of the bombing of a state-owned broadcaster in Belgrade.

"Twenty five years ago, NATO bombed the main studio of Yugoslavia's state-owned broadcasting company, Radio-Television Serbia (RTS)," writes *Declassified UK*, an independent news agency. "The attack at 2am on 23rd April 1999 came amid Bill Clinton and Tony Blair's 'humanitarian intervention' in Kosovo."

"Sixteen media workers were killed and 19 injured in the strike on RTS, which remains the single most controversial event



in NATO's 78-day military campaign," notes journalist John McEvoy.

The UK and allied NATO forces claimed to be acting in the interest of protecting ethnic Albanians as ethnic violence broke out on all sides during the breakup of the former socialist Yugoslav republic. But President Slobodan Milošević remained a conspicuous holdout as newly-independent states deregulated their economies in line with neo-liberal economic policy advocated by Western governments.

The USA would back numerous "colour revolu-

tions" after the fall of the Eastern Bloc, with wealthy donors such as George Soros encouraging and standing to benefit from economic liberalisation enforced by Western-led institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The case of Milošević demonstrates a scenario during which the USA was willing to employ substantial military force to seek regime change, paving the way for NATO aggression in countries such as Libya and Afghanistan.

Blair claimed the destruction of the RTS head-

quarters and other civilian targets was justified in the name of dismantling the "dictatorship" of Milošević. Sixteen media workers were killed during the bombing, which Amnesty International labelled a "war crime".

"Killing journalists does not stop censorship, it only brings more repression," the International Federation of Journalists said.

"We do not see how the suppression of news sources can serve any useful purpose," said European Broadcasting Union (EBU) president Albert Scharf. "Over and beyond the deaths involved, the EBU is concerned about any attempts to limit the rights of audiences to full news services."

Declassified files now reveal that Tony Blair was warned against the depraved attack at the time by Attorney General John Morris, who questioned

how the destruction of the broadcast headquarters was related to NATO's purported cause in ensuring "relief of humanitarian need in Kosovo".

The UK and the USA launched the illegal act of aggression in Belgrade without a required UN Security Council resolution, demonstrating the lengths to which NATO was willing to go to ensure Western hegemony after the end of the Cold War.

"We are moving towards a situation where our aim will become removing Milosevic," admitted Blair in a note at the time, revealing that regime change was the ultimate motive of the assault. "Plainly Milosevic will threaten the stability of the region as long as he remains."

NATO forces would go on to strike a number of other civilian targets including Belgrade's Hotel Jugoslavija and Montenegro's main airport, with

little apparent concern for the climbing death toll. Thousands were killed or wounded by the end of the campaign and elevated rates of cancer and birth defects are still observed due to NATO's highly controversial use of depleted uranium.

The UK would become the first of a number of Western countries to recognise the disputed break-away territory of Kosovo in 2008. The future leader of Kosovo, Hashim Thaci, who played a key role during the NATO aggression via his leadership of the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army, is currently on trial for war crimes at The Hague. But the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, under intense pressure from the USA, would controversially decide against investigating the bombing of the RTS TV station as a war crime.

Sputnik

REVIEW A Democratic German report

by Alan Stewart

Beyond the Wall: East Germany, 1949–1990 by Katja Hoyer. Allen Lane: 2024; 496pp. Hardback rrp £25. Softback rrp: £12.99.

Katja Hoyer is a German-British historian; she is a visiting Research Fellow at King's College London. In her new book she argues that it is "time to take a serious look at the other Germany behind the Wall" and look at life in the German Democratic Republic (GDR).

She points out that after

an initial concentration on industrialisation, the GDR leaders Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker focused on improving living standards.

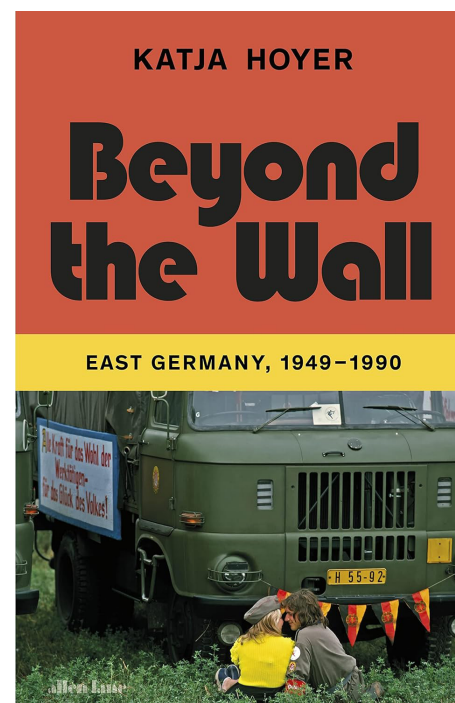
Only six per cent of homes had washing machines at the start of the 1960s. Over half had one by the end of the decade. By 1970 over half of households had refrigerators (only 28 per cent of West German homes did). The number of GDR citizens with a car nearly doubled between 1970 and 1975. By 1980 almost every home had a television.

The GDR was also a

state where social mobility thrived. Around a third of GDR university students were from working-class backgrounds. In West Germany the figure was just three per cent.

Then there was gender equality. By the early 1980s over 90 per cent of women were employed – more than anywhere else in the world. They occupied all sorts of positions, from doctors and factory workers to lawyers and professors. Indeed, around 50 per cent of district and regional judges in the GDR were female.

Plus there was direct



democracy in the GDR. Petitions known as 'Eingaben' were a common way for citizens to raise grievances. Every year hundreds of thousands of letters flowed to central government. Even on LGBT issues the GDR was more progressive than West Germany.

After the GDR disappeared in October 1990 jobs were cut, welfare was slashed and public property was auctioned off. Since 1990 social mobility has ground to a halt. Germany now ranks bottom for opportunity, worse than the USA!

Greetings to peace activists of the Netherlands

We are publishing the contents of this video message from one of our closest friends, Leonin Ilderkhin, because it gives a brief but excellent description of the situation in Ukraine, and of the demands of all Ukrainian anti-fascist democrats and patriots.

Dear friends, my name is Leonin Ilderkhin, I'm from the Co-ordination Council of the Union of Political Emigrants and Political Prisoners of Ukraine.

We greet with all of our hearts your event in the Netherlands, and the other places where you make your great activities.

I want to speak briefly about the core issue of the present day conflict around and inside of Ukraine.

The roots of this conflict lie in the desire of the capitalist centres, which are the USA and the UK,

to revive their economy and their military industrial complex. Now, by using the present day conflict, they have achieved their goals, partially. They have revived their military industrial complex, and they have raised the prices in the world for weapons.

They have oppressed Western Europe and generally the European Union by greatly increasing the price of natural gas, oil and other necessities. In this they are destroying their competitors in Western Europe, and in this way they want to oppress the

Russian Federation.

They don't care about what is happening in Ukraine or what is happening to the population of Ukraine, to the people there. They don't care, they consider the Ukrainian land as a territory where they test their weapons, where they test their military capabilities. In this way they hope to overcome the general crisis of capitalism that started in 2007–8. They are trying to escape from their own internal crisis.

In this situation we want to put forward these slogans: No weapons to

the conflict zones, whether it is Ukraine, Palestine or Yemen; No weapons, no military personnel and no mercenaries to these conflict zones – from Western Europe, from the USA, from Britain or from France.

In this situation we want to oppose all actions which promote the continuation of conflict. The USA and England plan to occupy all the countries of Eastern Europe including the Baltic countries, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Bulgaria, etc.

We don't want this, we

want peace in Europe, we want peace in the world. In this situation we want

to give our great support from our hearts to you, dear friends.



• Leonin Ilderkhin.

The Hypocrites

by Guillermo Alvarado

When the humanitarian cost in the Gaza Strip exceeds all imaginable limits and there are more than 40,000 dead, mostly women and children, as a result of the Zionist bombings and ground attacks, it is disgusting to see how those mainly responsible for this atrocity try to clean their image.

Last week the President of the USA, Joe Biden, and his Secretary of State, Antony Blinken, were saying to the four winds that everything was ready to start a cease-fire and that the State of Israel was doing everything possible to make it happen.

At the same time, as if in a well-orchestrated script, Benjamin Netanyahu urged the international community to “put pressure” on the Hamas movement to bring about the

cease-fire, in a display of hypocrisy so brutal that it would be laughable were the timing not so tragic.

So if the carnage continues, the responsibility lies not with Tel Aviv or Washington, but with the martyred Palestinian people, whose suffering is

reaching unprecedented levels every day, whose children are dying from shrapnel, hunger and disease, and who have virtually no safe haven.

While the statements of Biden, Blinken and Netanyahu got all the attention of the Western press, few

remember an event that also took place last week that shows the two-faced hypocrisy of the guilty parties.

While trying to convince us that it is working for a ceasefire in Gaza, the White House approved an agreement to sell Israel

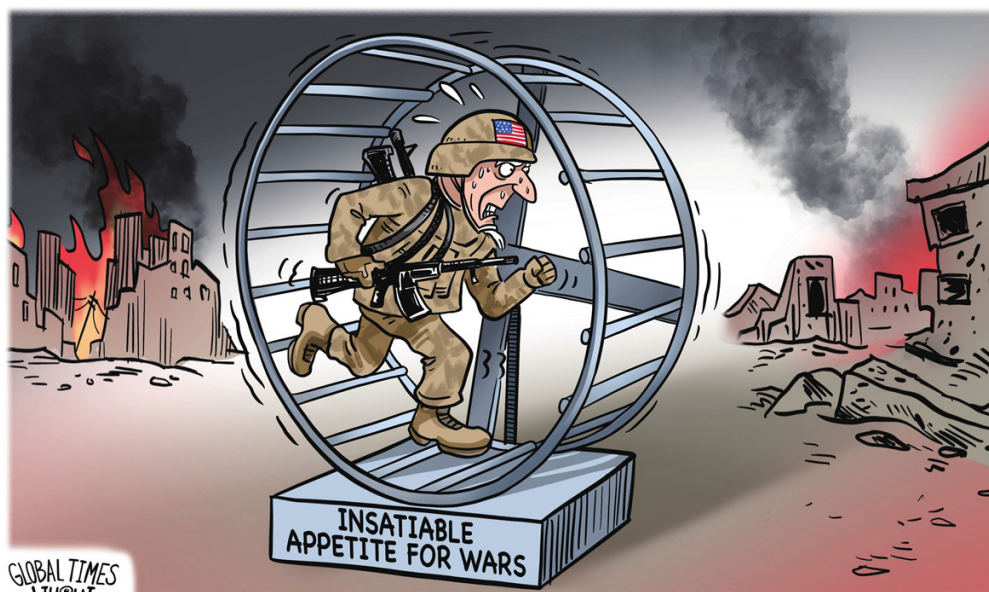
a huge military package worth 20 billion dollars. The content of the deal is not just anything, as it includes 50 F-15s of the most advanced version, 30 medium-range missiles, 30,000 tank warheads, 50,000 mortars, tactical vehicles, state-of-the-art

electronic scanning radars and other weapons.

It is logical to ask whether these governments are really working for peace when they make a commercial exchange for war on such a scale, or are they simply laughing at the whole world?

Sami Abouy Zohri, from the political bureau of Hamas, rightly said that we are not close to a real agreement or negotiations, but to the imposition of US dictates. Meanwhile, the drama continues, there are almost no ambulances in the north of the Strip, and if there were, there is nowhere to treat the wounded or sick, while in the world there are more and more meetings and declarations that do not save a single innocent life.

Radio Havana Cuba



The Kursk gambit: the Samson option

The recent major Ukrainian military incursion across the Russia border in the Kursk region has left everyone scratching their heads in puzzlement. What possible advantage is there in invading an area of no apparent strategic importance when it is clear that full-on defence is necessary in the Donbas?

A number of commentators have, however, identified the obvious target in the area: the Kursk nuclear power station. So I will share some thoughts about the serious dangers associated with targeting nuclear power stations and the presence of nuclear plants in war zones. In a previous article I wrote about the Ukraine attacks on the [Russian held] Zaporozhye nuclear plant, I mentioned

Dr Chris Busby, the scientific secretary of the European Committee on Radiation Risk and a former member of the UK Defence Ministry's Oversight Committee on Depleted Uranium, shares his concerns about the situation around the Kursk Nuclear Power Plant.

the 'Samson option'. Like Samson who pulled the pillars down and killed everyone including himself, it is all you have left when everything is lost. Although here it may have a more strategic component.

A nuclear disaster in Zaporozhye with a meltdown or an explosion releasing fission-products like Chernobyl across Europe and the world would invite the invasion of the area by Europe (by NATO) to 'save' the Europeans from the down-stream effects of any exacerbation. It seems that Ukraine is continuing to fire missiles and drones at the Zaporozhye

plant. But the plant itself is a pressurised-water reactor with thick concrete walls that would be pretty hard to penetrate. Of course, the spent fuel pools are easy to hit, and the supplementary control systems, the cooling, and those things are vulnerable.

Kursk, however, is another matter. This nuclear site has RBMK reactors like Chernobyl and these have no thick concrete shielding – they are therefore vulnerable to missile and drone attacks that could damage the reactor systems directly. Unlike Zaporozhye, where the reactors are in shutdown,

in Kursk one of these is apparently operating. And it appears that Ukraine is firing missiles and drones at the Kursk plant.

As with Zaporozhye, the Russians have sent for the cavalry, in the form of IAEA Director General Rafael Grossi. He has visited the plant and agrees that there is indeed danger of a nuclear incident. He was shown evidence of military activity near the plant and agreed that this was a bad thing. Well, what else could he say? He is apparently going to Kiev to talk to President Zelensky.

There are two things I think about this. First, fol-

lowing all the arguments about who blew up the Nord Stream pipelines, it seems clear that Ukraine has more than one head. There are inputs from a range of players in the West and also different ideas about what to do are held by players and groups inside Ukraine itself. Who is in charge?

It seems to me that no-one really has control of everything that happens and that there are independent chaotic elements in play here with aims and strategies that are hard to fathom. The possibilities in this new Kursk theatre are therefore scary. For

example, it is an obvious Great Game strategy to pop a cruise missile into the critical Kursk reactor, cause a nuclear explosion and then call in NATO to 'save' Europe. That's the one [thing] I fear. But having Grossi visit Kiev seems to me to have no real value except to keep the issue on the front pages for a while. Grossi is not a policeman. We do not need Grossi to tell everyone that there are serious downstream effects associated with firing missiles at a vulnerable and operating nuclear reactor. What is the solution?

It is to do whatever it takes to stop Ukraine or those players inside (or outside) Ukraine from arranging attacks on either of the nuclear plants. If one of those reactors goes up, Europe is in deep trouble...

Ukraine: a useful tool for imperialism in Africa

by G Dunkel

According to reports in the corporate media, Ukraine is using its special forces to attack the Russian support mission in Syria and is supplying critical intelligence to reactionary movements that are trying to dismantle Mali in Africa's Sahel region.

French imperialism has been pushed out of the Sahel. The Kiev regime in Ukraine is trying to help Paris get back in.

Russia's involvement in Syria goes back to September 2015, when the government of Bashar al-Assad asked for military support against US and NATO intervention using reactionaries (like ISIS or

Al-Qaeda) in an attempt to overthrow the Syrian government. Russia has a training mission in north-west Syria and a naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus, which it began expanding in 2022.

American imperialism still has about 1,000 soldiers stationed in Syria, mainly based in areas in the north-east close to the Iraqi border where most of Syria's oil reserves are and where the population is mostly Kurdish. Using Ukrainian special forces to harass the Russian support mission lets Washington reduce the risks that a direct confrontation of American and Russian forces would involve.

French imperialism, the former colonial ruler

of much of West Africa, began its direct military intervention in Mali in 2013 when the separatists in the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) seized Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu, major cities in the north. (Azawad is what the MNLA calls the northern part of Mali.)

The MNLA, which began as a movement representing the Tuareg people living in northern Mali, made an alliance with Ansar Dine, an affiliate of Al Qaeda. There was a lot of political manoeuvring between MNLA, the Malian government, France and similar local groups.

France was the former colonial overlord of Mali and its neighbours – Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso,

Ivory Coast, Guinea (Conakry), Senegal and Mauritania. The French troops that made up their intervention forces failed to contain those groups attacking Mali's government. France's military acted so arrogantly – as if Mali was still a colony – that the Malians asked France to leave immediately in February 2022.

The French government delayed leaving and tried to wait for a change in government, as the Malian government that asked them to leave was the result of a military coup. The French delayed and left completely in August.

In 2021, the Malian government hired the Wagner group, a privately owned Russian military company, to provide training to its

armed forces and security to government officials, tasks that the French forces neglected.

After the French left, the Malian Armed Forces and the Wagner Group generally conducted joint operations.

Soldiers from the Wagner Group and the Malian Armed Forces were operating on the Algerian border near the commune of Tinzaouaten in late July when an insurgent group ambushed them, leaving dozens of Malian and Wagner forces killed, injured or captured and the insurgents in control of the commune.

Andriy Yusov, the spokesperson for Ukraine's military intelligence, was speaking on

Ukrainian television when he indicated Kyiv's possible involvement: "That the rebels received the necessary data to successfully carry out an operation against Russian war criminals has been observed by the entire world. Of course, we will not disclose details."

Some security analysts with inside knowledge of the attacks said Ukrainian forces could have provided limited training to Tuareg fighters, teaching them how to operate drones, drop IEDs [improvised explosive devices] and launch mortar attacks. Ukraine is proving to be a very useful proxy for both European and American imperialism.

Workers World (USA)