

Gaza: End the ‘historic horror’

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

HAMAS IS DEMANDING that hundreds of aid trucks be allowed into the Gaza Strip as a precondition for continuing talks with Israel while People’s China repeated its call for an immediate end to the fighting at a meeting of the UN Security Council this week.

The Chinese envoy, Geng Shuang, called for an immediate and lasting ceasefire, the implementation of the two-state solution, and the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. But few believe that’s going to happen amid reports that the Netanyahu government is preparing for a new offensive to totally occupy the Strip – risking the lives of the remaining Israelis still in Palestinian hands and regardless of the inevitable heavy losses that their own army will suffer.

Since October 2023 the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza has so far resulted in at least 60,933 Palestinian fatalities, with over 148,722 others injured. Most were civilians. Thousands more victims are feared trapped under rubble, inaccessible to rescue teams due to Israeli attacks. Israel’s genocidal campaign continues un-

abated despite calls from the UN Security Council for an immediate ceasefire and directives from the International Court of Justice urging measures to prevent genocide and alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Meanwhile in Tel Aviv around 2,400 Israeli artists and architects have signed two separate petitions demanding an immediate end to Israel’s starvation policy, forced displacement of Palestinians and war crimes in Gaza. Around 1,000 Israeli cultural figures, including prominent names in music, the stage, literature and film have signed a petition calling for “an immediate ceasefire in Gaza”.

“We, the artists of Israel, refuse to be complicit – against our will – in the atrocities committed in Gaza: the killing of children and civilians, starvation, displacement and the senseless destruction of Gaza’s cities,” the petition said. “We appeal to decision-makers: Stop! Do not issue unlawful orders. Do not commit war crimes. Do not abandon ethical and humanitarian principles or the values of Judaism,” it added. “Stop the war. Bring the hostages home”.



A second petition, signed by nearly 1,400 visual artists, designers and architects described the situation in Gaza as “horror on a historic scale” and warned of a deepening humanitarian catastrophe. “The Israeli public bears responsibility for what is happening just a few kilometres away,” it stated.

Meanwhile the Hostages and Missing Families Forum says Netanyahu is leading Israel and the hostages to the abyss. “Netanyahu is preparing the greatest scam,” says the Forum which represents the families of the remaining 50 prisoners. “The talk, which has been heard again and again, about releasing the hostages through decisive victory, is a fraud. For 22 months the public has been sold the illusion that ‘military pressure’ and ‘intense fighting’ will bring the hostages back. Even before the

draft for a comprehensive deal was written, we’re being told there is no feasibility for a deal. The truth must be told: expanding the war endangers the lives of the hostages who are at risk of imminent death. We

saw the chilling images of the hostages in the tunnels, they won’t survive more long days of horror,” the campaign said, adding that expanding the Gaza war “is a guarantee of the failure of the century”.

FUND

The August appeal started this week with £510 in the bag, largely from the monthly standing orders from supporters that are the stepping stones of the fighting fund and topped up by donations from the Metropolitan Cell & Supporters Group that raised £80 for the *New Worker* last month and not forgetting the comrades from Hull, Hereford and Lambeth who all gave tenners to help us on our way.

All round the country a new generation is on the street – demanding change, supporting the Palestinians and saying no to the old guard and their corrupt oppressive system. That’s why we need to get the *New Worker* out on the street every day to challenge the myths of the bourgeoisie who tell us this is the best that it’s ever going to get and lies of the imperialists and Zionists who want to plunge the world into another global conflict. There is an answer to the crisis – socialism. Make sure that it’s heard by by supporting the fighting fund and keeping us going.

Please send your donations to: *New Worker* Fund, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ. Cheques and postal orders should be made payable to the ‘*New Worker*’.

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

<http://newworker.org/npccentral/fightingfund.html>

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The thin end of the wedge

THOUGH THE supporters of Palestine Action have won their bid to legally challenge the British government's decision to ban them in the High Court the witch-hunt continues as the Establishment lashes out in feverish attempts to put a lid on the mass movement in solidarity with the Palestinians who are being starved to death in the Gaza Strip.

The ludicrous interpretation of the anti-terrorism laws has led to a protester being threatened with prosecution by a policeman in Canterbury for holding a Palestinian flag and displaying signs saying "Free Gaza" and "Israel is committing genocide" and the arrest of hundreds of others across the country on terror charges. In most cases simply for carrying a placard supporting the banned direct action movement at a demonstration.

Now the campaign set up to overturn the ban on the direct action group, which the government banned on the grounds that spray-painting RAF jets and vandalising the offices of arms manufacturers that supply weapons to Israel constituted acts of "terrorism", has also been shut down.

The Defend Our Juries website was taken down this week. The Terrorism Act 2000 specifically ensures that it is lawful to organise for the de-proscription of a group. But their web hosts imply that the campaign may have been in breach of their terms and conditions. Defend Our Juries have checked it out. They say there is no breach.

Innuendo, threats, the hidden hand...this is what happens when a witch-hunt begins.

Thousands of people have now been blocked from legal information to ensure their legal rights are upheld. This is an attack on our supposed freedom of speech. This is what happens when the Government uses anti-terror law to silence dissent.

It's still the same old story...

...a fight for love and glory – that's how the old song goes. Or as Napoleon said: a soldier will fight long and hard for a bit of coloured ribbon. And some people, even today, crave for the acclaim of the world and the medals and fame that go with it. Men like Donald Trump who does nothing to mask his desire for a Nobel Peace Prize.

Though the Donald has been nominated for the Nobel on four occasions over the years his supposed efforts to promote peace and resolve global conflicts have, so far, failed to impress the Nobel Peace Committee.

He, no doubt, hopes that the committee will now be more than impressed by news from Moscow that suggests that an end to the war in Ukraine is finally in sight.

The Russians say they've received an "acceptable" offer from the Americans on settling the Ukraine conflict following a visit by Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff to Moscow this week. There's even talk of a Trump/Putin summit, possibly in the Emirates, later in the month.

Though not in the same league as Obama or a Biden Trump still has plenty of blood on his hands. Syria; Iran; the Gaza Strip – not a good start for a wannabe peace prize winner. Still he's now got a new nomination from the Cambodians. Whether his latest initiative on Ukraine can tip the balance in his favour when the Norwegian Nobel Committee meets, however, remains to be seen...

Hiroshima: 80 years after

ON WEDNESDAY, the bell at Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park tolled once again. At a solemn ceremony attendees reaffirmed their commitment to peace. Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba called for the establishment of "a world without nuclear war and a world without nuclear weapons".

On the 80th anniversary of the Hiroshima atomic bombing people should deeply examine the true meaning of the remembrance and explore how to uphold a correct historical perspective on WWII and maintain global common security.

The atomic bombings that struck 80 years ago were undoubtedly one of humanity's greatest tragedies. "Hiroshima" and "Nagasaki" have become powerful symbols driving post-war Japan onto the path of pacifism. Based on this painful memory, Article Nine of Japan's Constitution renounces war as a sovereign right of the nation. And in 1971 the Japanese parliament established the "three non-nuclear principles" – not to possess, produce, or permit the introduction of nuclear weapons – as a national policy. As the only country to have suffered a nuclear attack, Japan has actively positioned itself on the international stage as a leading advocate of nuclear disarmament. However, behind this narrative lies a selectively constructed "safe zone" that renders Japan's stance contradictory.

contrast

Japan's proclaimed anti-nuclear weapons position stands in sharp contrast to its deep reliance on the American nuclear umbrella. On one hand, the Japanese government waves the banner of a world without nuclear weapons. On the other, it firmly anchors its national security to the deterrent power of the US nuclear arsenal. Whether in urging the USA to extend its nuclear deterrence or proposing "nuclear sharing" the essence is to pursue a pre-emptive nuclear deterrent – one that heightens the risks of nuclear proliferation and conflict. This severely undermines Japan's moral standing in advocating for global nuclear disarmament.

While amplifying its "victimhood" narrative Japan's nuclear materials policy also raises serious concerns. Although Japan is a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, it stores large quantities of separated plutonium – sensitive material that can be directly used to manufacture nuclear weapons – under the pretext of peaceful nuclear energy use. A few years ago Japan even under-reported 640 kilograms of plutonium, a serious violation.

instability

According to the International Atomic Energy Agency Japan possesses enough separated plutonium to make thousands of nuclear warheads. In addition Japan also has the necessary technical expertise to make it a potential nuclear threshold state. Occasional calls by some right-wing politicians to pursue an "independent nuclear deterrent" counter Japan's ideal of "a world without nuclear weapons" and only adds further instability to regional security.

Some people in Japan portray themselves as victims of nuclear bombings while simultaneously displaying an intense obsession with building "nuclear deterrence". As the USA now views China as its greatest strategic competitor, Japan's right-wing forces see an opportunity to break free from the strategic restraints that have bound them for 80 years. In recent years Japan has repeatedly hyped up the so-called "nuclear threat" posed by China, Russia, and others as a pretext to strengthen its own defence capabilities and bolster the US-Japan alliance. Meanwhile Washington, driven by geopolitical interests, turns a blind eye to the signs of a resurgence of Japanese militarism. It's worth noting that if Japan makes a qualitative breakthrough on the nuclear issue the cage that has contained Japanese militarism will collapse severely challenging peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, which would backfire on the USA.

The so-called "nuclear umbrella" is far from the safe and reliable shield Japan has imagined. On the contrary, it could actually push Japan to the front-line of a nuclear con-

flict as risks escalate, making it a sacrificial pawn in geo-politics. The US Navy's nuclear submarines visiting Japanese ports and the deployment of nuclear submarines by the AUKUS alliance in the region are clear signs that "nuclear sharing" among these countries is eroding the global nuclear security order, undermining strategic balance and stability at both regional and global levels, and obstructing the process of international arms control.

The commemoration of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki should begin with a deep reflection on the brutality of war. The tragedy of the nuclear attacks was rooted in the war of aggression launched by Japanese militarism. If this historical context is ignored and the victims of the bombings are mourned in isolation, it risks falling into the trap of historical nihilism and blurring Japan's culpability as a wartime aggressor. Therefore, upholding a correct historical perspective on the Second World War should be both the premise and the core of the commemoration.

calls for peace

This means Japan must confront its history of aggression and wartime atrocities with an honest and comprehensive attitude, acknowledging the tremendous suffering it inflicted upon its Asian neighbours. Only then can the commemoration of the nuclear attacks resonate with moral significance and only then will its calls for peace carry weight.

Having endured the ravages of war human society has come to understand the importance of cherishing peace, expanding co-operation, and pursuing common development. Today's global security challenges, including the risks of nuclear proliferation, cannot be solved by strengthening military alliances or fuelling bloc confrontations. Finding answers to prevent the recurrence of past tragedies requires the courage to face history, the wisdom to transcend group rivalry, and above all, the resolve to build a community with a shared future for humanity. This is the true meaning of commemorating Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Global Times

Workers' Notes

The Staggering State of the Unions

by New Worker correspondent

TWO SETS of complementary official annual statistics relating to British trade union membership were published recently. In May came Trade Union Membership, UK, 1995 to 2024: Statistical Bulletin from the Department of Business & Trade. This presented a depressing picture of trade unionism based on the Department's Labour Force Survey of approximately 28,000 households (63,000 individuals) and revealed that once again the number of workers in unions had fallen, this time to a mere twenty-two per cent.

The second set of figures came out last month. This was the Certification Officer for Trade Unions and Employers' Associations Annual Report for 2024-25. It is based on figure provided by the unions and this year's showed a growth in the number of trade union members by 21.8 per cent from 5.5 million to 6.7 million. However, we should not get excited by this. The rise was simply due to Unite the Union finally getting its act together this year and managing to get most of its figures in on time (oddly missing was the salary of its General Secretary, a point members ought to be asking about). Apart from that the picture remains unencouraging.

There were 128 registered trade unions, the same as last year. Four vanished off the face of the earth: the Aircrew Officers Association, the Balfour Beatty Staff Association and the Leek Building Society Staff dissolved. However it is nice to know the Leeds Building Society Colleague Associa-

tion soldiers on.

The Boots Pharmacists Association merged with the Pharmacists Defence Association. How the movement will cope with their loss remains to be seen. The TUC presently represents 48 unions, but accounts for the vast majority of trade unionists.

To replace them four new unions emerged: Two sound serious: the Independent Ox-fam Union and the United Medical Associate Professionals Trade Union seem to fill a gap in the market. One suspects that the former arose from disappointment with Unite which has represented members in recent disputes and the latter is seeking to represent a new class of medics not entirely welcomed by the British Medical Association.

As for the other two, Libertas Union and Yourmate Union both claim to "represent workers in all industries" but only the latter has a functioning website and last made a Facebook posting more than a year ago. One wonders if the Certification Officer needs to do more than make sure unions actually undertake some proper union work before giving them the stamp of approval.

The Big Picture

First we examine the Trade Union Membership, UK, 1995 to 2024: Statistical Bulletin. These do not relate to particular industries or unions but supply information on a sector-by-sector basis. It shows that that in late 2024 there were 6.4 million trade unionists in the UK (300,000 less than those reported by trade unions). This means that only 22 per cent of the workforce are in unions. This is the lowest density ever recorded.

The high point of union membership, 13.2 million, was in 1979. The decline was rapid in the 1980s until the mid-1990s, largely due to the deindustrialisation. In 1996 when there were still 7.9 million card holders representing 32.4 per cent of the workforce. From then on it has been a tale of steady decline, with only occasional isolated years of small, local-

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Stand with the Ukrainian anti-fascists!



by New Worker correspondent

ACTIVISTS protested in central London last weekend in solidarity with the millions of Ukrainians resisting the Banderite dictatorship, and the maurading military "headhunter" gangs grabbing men off the

streets across the country to send to a war which 70 per cent of Ukrainians no longer support.

Dozens of people showed support for the protest, clapped and took photos. Only one person spoke to us opposing our slogans, and engaged in a long, and appar-

ently pointless, discussion. The picket opposite Downing Street in Whitehall was organised by the International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity movement that campaigns in support of the people of the Donbas and the Ukrainian resistance fighting the fascist puppet regime in Kiev.

Stop Starving Gaza!

by New Worker correspondent

LAST Saturday thousands joined Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) actions at over 50 locations around the country, including eight across London, and laid down pots and pans to demand our politicians take action to end Israel's starvation of Gaza. "We must keep the pressure up," says the PSC "as we once more lay down pots and pans to represent those starved to death by Israel's genocidal blockade and demand our politicians take action to end Israel's starvation of Gaza. We won't stop until our government ends all complicity in Israel's genocidal violence".

In south London Vanessa Redgrave, the veteran campaigning actress, joined protesters demonstrating for an hour outside Lambeth town hall in Brixton for an end to the genocide and for Lambeth council to divest its pension fund of enterprises linked to the Zionist entity.



"Tonight, local people responded powerfully to the national call from PSC to protest the genocide and Israel's deliberate starvation of Palestinians, a horror we are all witnessing" said Micki Loebner from the Lambeth and Southwark 4 Palestine campaign. He told the media that "in Lambeth, we wanted to join the wave of demonstrations happening across

the country and also send a clear message to Lambeth Council: stop investing pension funds in Israeli companies complicit in this genocide. They are still refusing to act. The turnout tonight, especially on such short notice, shows that ordinary people are determined to stand up for Palestine. We see the genocide, and we will keep protesting".

continued from page 3

ised and usually reversible growth.

Perhaps the most serious is the huge gap between the comparatively healthy public sector with 49.9 per cent organised and the 11.7 per cent in the private sector. This urgently needs addressing, if unions are to have any continuing relevance. Two of the largest, Unite and GMB, are based in both sectors are best placed to do some head scratching and take action. While Unison has seen an influx of recruits in those councils now controlled by Reform UK.

The overall loss was caused by a fall in private sector membership of 57,000 to 2.5 million in 2024. Growth of 20,000 to 3.9 million in the public sector did not offset the overall decline. In the public sector female employee membership rose by 87,000 but male public sector membership declined by 67,000 in 2024.

Most of the figures make for bleak reading. Almost every bright spot has a bleak parallel. For instance, the point that 64 per cent of workers with degrees or other higher education qualifications are in unions only highlights the fact that far more workers without letters after their names are not or-

ganised.

This is confirmed by the proportions of employees in trade unions by weekly earnings. Only 7.7 per cent of those on low wages of £250 a week were in unions, 18.5 of those earning £250 to £499 were unionised, the peak was those on £500 to £900 where 27.1 were in unions, 19.9 of those lucky people on £1,000 and above every week per week, confirms the view that better off workers now form the bulk of the membership rather than those who founded the unions, often in the face of great adversity.

Longer serving workers were more inclined to trade unionism with 43 per cent being with their current employer for 10 years, but in contrast unionism shows signs of going out of fashion among the nation's youth. Only 4.4 per cent of union members are aged between 16 and 24, 20.6 are between 25 and 34, with 37.3 between 35 to 49, while 37.7 were 50 or above.

The survey suggests that at least part of the private sector unionisation is down to privatisation. The highest proportions of unionised employees are in Education at 45.0 followed by Public Administration and Defence

(excluding the armed forces, where unions are banned) on 42.3, Human Health and Social Work at 36.5 and Transportation and Storage with 34.8 per cent. In these sectors many unions either had their origins as professional bodies or have dual functions.

Northern Ireland had the highest membership density with 34 per cent, with Wales slightly behind on 29.5 and Scotland on 27 with England well behind on 20.6 as a whole. But last year England was the only area to experience growth.

Within England there is massive variation in unionisation. The gold medal goes to the North East on 25.6, the North West gets the silver for its 25.0. The booby prize went to London on 17.8. On a positive note the latest figures confirm that unions are good for workers. In 2024, the trade union wage gap increased by 0.7 percentage points to 4.9 per cent above the wages of non-members.

The Big Boys

Turning to the actual unions we discover that more than two thirds of trade unionists belong to just seven unions with at least 250,000 members each. Unison is

the largest with 1,403,792, Unite is slightly behind with 1,177,292, GMB's is a distant bronze with 576,463. Breathing down GMB's neck in fourth place is the Royal College of Nursing (Patron HM the King). The main teaching union, the National Education Union, comes fifth with 487,420. The Union of Shop, Distributive & Allied Workers claims 360,394. The sounds good until it is realised that the retail sector employs 2.84 million people in the UK.

smallest

The National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers is the smallest of those over the 250,000 mark on 285,963. Those above 100,000 are in descending order, the British Medical Association with 191,105, the Public and Commercial Services union on 189,399, the Communication Workers Union with 170,324, Prospect 156,904 and finally the University and College Union with 119,785. The other 111 unions account for 1,030,675 with eight of these having a grand total of 343 members among them.

Among the smaller unions the once mighty Nation-

al Union of Mineworkers now only has 191 members. That Community, whose main component is the former Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and textile industry unions, only has 43,586 members tells its own story of deindustrialisation.

It is also delightful to learn of the existence of the 117 strong Palm Paper Staff Association which claims a membership density of 56 per cent at the King's Lynn newsprint plant. No doubt the TUC will be anxious to recruit them as they are comparatively successful by private sector standards. Less delightful is the continued existence of "Solidarity: the Union of British Workers" whose General Secretary is Patrick Harrington, a major figure in the National Front in the 1980s.

Not everyone is convinced he has changed is spots, despite the website being headed by stock photographs including a hajib clad woman. As it has only 206 members and only offers support at disciplinary and Employment Tribunal hearings it is not worth too much about. The statisticians have interpreted the figures in many ways. The point, however is to drastically improve them.

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

New Worker 12 August 2005

John Bolton, the man who once publicly said that: "Nothing would happen if ten floors of the United Nations building in New York disappeared," will become the new United States ambassador to the world's most important international organisation, thanks to President George W Bush's imposition behind the back of

Congress.

In a hurried and tense ceremony in the White House, the US president appointed Bolton as the United States' permanent representative to the UN, despite the marked reluctance of Congress and of international personalities and analysts.

Taking advantage of the Congressional summer recess, Bush eluded the Senate and turned his friend into what constitutes the US's point man in the United Nations in a move designed to make that institution even more submissive to Washington.

The new US representative to the United Nations

boasts a long record of ultra conservative political service which was enough to satisfy Bush, though Democratic lawmakers did everything possible to block his designation for several months.

The new ambassador has also been a member for many years of the Federalist Society, a group of conservative jurists opposed the application of international law to decisions by Washington, because they threatened the sovereignty of the United States.

Bolton is part of a nucleus of neo-conservative theoreticians who together like Paul Wolfowitz, now President of the World

Bank, have surrounded Bush since his first term in office and who urge him to implement the most warlike doctrines.

Bolton, like his boss and other White House ideologues, is an enemy of multilateralism. Bolton represents positions force, believes that the United Nations is worthless and he is characterised with aggressive, undiplomatic and humiliating treatment of his subordinates.

In 1993 John Bolton became a fellow of the right-wing Manhattan Institute, and later of the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank which is most influential within the US

government. He was also the protagonist in a long dispute with US intelligence agents because of his public accusations the Cuba had a biological weapons programme, a claimed categorically denied by Havana as well as international observers invited by the government to visit the island.

One thing is sure: with the arrival of Bolton, the UN can expect long torturous delays because he will head forces that wish to impose unilateralism, the same method that was used to neutralise the world and launch the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Pravda.ru special correspondent Darya Aslamova, during her trip to Donbas, interviewed a young US volunteer who left everything he had and arrived in the region to help people. In the interview, the Texan reveals why he decided to buy a plane ticket to Russia.

Hello. Please introduce yourself. What's your name and where are you from?

Hi, how are you? My name is Elijah. I'm from America. I'm here to help people – I'm a volunteer.

You truly wanted to become a volunteer, right?

Yes, I'm a volunteer.

Which city in the US are you from?

I'm from Texas.

I see. No details – I take it you're undercover?

Yeah, I try not to stand out. Just trying to blend in, you know?

Why did you come here, to Donbas?

I came to Donbas because I want to help people. Back in 2014, when Crimea happened, the media in America said that Russia had invaded Ukraine. That's how it was framed. But I don't trust the media, so I started investigating for myself. Thanks to independent journalists, I was able to understand what really happened – how it all evolved, and how it led to the Special Military Operation in 2022.

When I realised how many people were dying, the conditions they lived in, and how unfairly they were treated – I came to the conclusion that America was to blame. America and the West started this whole mess. And knowing that, I couldn't just sit back at home. It felt wrong that these people were left without help, and the media ig-

An American volunteer in the Donbas



nored their side of the story.

I don't know exactly what pushed me, but one day I just got up, bought a plane ticket – and here I am. And you know what? I feel good about it. I'm ready to do whatever is needed. I've been here for a couple of months now and I'm ready to do anything – whether it's manual work or technical. I can fix equipment, 3D print parts... and if needed – I'll go to the front. I'm not afraid. In Texas, we all grow up with guns. I've known how to handle weapons since I was a kid.

So, could you even become a sniper?

Oh no, I'm nowhere near that level. That takes real skill. But I wouldn't mind learning.

Aren't you afraid?

Of course I'm afraid. But fear isn't the worst thing. Everyone feels fear. What matters is what you do despite that fear. That's what defines a person's character. Yes, I'm afraid – but I'm here, helping. And

that makes me feel brave.

How old are you?

I'm 25.

Only 25?

Yeah.

Do you have an education? Did you go to college?

I started college in Texas. But I dropped out – I realised it wasn't for me. I wanted to join the US Army, but I couldn't accept the politics America follows. Especially in the Middle East – I think it was all wrong from the start. When you realise your country is doing injustice, it's hard to keep pretending you're on the good side. It's hard to support something that goes against your conscience.

You seriously wanted to join the US military?

Yes, I did.

And then you realised – if America is doing so much harm, you're on the wrong side?

That's exactly right.

So, do you believe Russia is in the right?

Yes, I believe Russia has the right to defend itself and its sovereignty. If it feels its borders are under threat, it should be allowed to act.

Do you see this as a Russia-Ukraine war? Or is it Russia versus Nato?

I wouldn't say it's Russia against Ukraine. It's more Russia against the West. I think the blame lies with politicians – especially in the USA – who still cling to Cold War thinking. Too many old people in Washington still see Russia as the enemy, the USSR as evil. They never let go of that image, and because of it, young people are dying. It breaks my heart to see old Ukrainian flags and Ukrainian-language signs still visible here. These peoples were so close – now they're killing each other. And it's all because of Western politics.

Like the conflict between Israel and Iran?

Exactly. Gaza, Afghanistan – conflicts everywhere. Even Pakistan and India recently flared up again – and I suspect the West had a hand in it. There's a saying: if two brothers are fighting, one of them recently had an Englishman over. American foreign policy is very wrong – even harmful. I really don't like it.

Do you think you'll ever be able to return to the USA? Aren't you afraid of the consequences?

Honestly, from the very start I decided I wouldn't return. I came here – and I plan to stay. Only if there's an emergency might I go back. But there's a real risk of arrest in the USA. If I can't stay in Russia, maybe I'll move to a friendly country. Russia is huge. It looks big on the map, but when you're here and realise it takes ten hours on a bus to go from one city to another – that's when you really grasp its scale.

Are you learning Russian? How many words do you know?

Around a thousand, but they always seem to slip my mind when I need them. I'm aiming for an A2 or B1 level. I need more practice. Where's the best place to get it here?

What phrases do you already know?

"Good afternoon," "hello" "welcome"... but as you can see, the moment I try to recall, I forget. I just need to speak more. I've been studying the language for six months, but only started speaking after I arrived. So I've only had a couple of months of real practice. I think in two years I'll be much better.

Thank you so much. Good luck and be brave!

Thank you!

pravda.ru

The Price of Freedom: A visit to the Lao People's Army History Museum

by Michael Christopher

THREE FIGURES stand atop a raised pedestal, their eyes fixed on the distant horizon: a young woman in traditional dress, raised sickle in hand, and a rifle slung over her shoulder; a young man sporting a labourer's uniform, with a hammer resting on his shoulder, gesturing into the distance. Front and centre to both, in the unmistakable uniform of the Lao People's Army, stands the figure of a young soldier, holding firmly to the rifle slung over his right shoulder as he leads them onwards.

Rising up from behind appear two flags – the red-white-and-blue of the free Lao people and the golden hammer-and-sickle emblazoned on a red field, representing the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP). They flutter in the hot summer sun, accenting the crest of the Lao People's Army that proudly adorns the entryway of the grand building further behind. This is the sight that greets visitors to the Lao People's Army History Museum in the Laotian capital of Vientiane setting the tone for what lies in store within.

Before entering, most guests will immediately be drawn towards the museum's first and most iconic exhibits: a hulking Soviet Mi-8 transport helicopter, an aged MiG-21 jet fighter, and an antique Antonov An-2 biplane. From there, flanking the entrance to the museum on either side, are a number



At the museum.

of field cannons and two tanks: one Soviet and one Chinese. Giving testament to the small nation's hard-fought road to freedom, all of these exhibits saw extensive combat experience in the previous century.

remodelled

The recently remodelled two-story museum, aside from being a welcome respite from the tropical mid-summer heat, is arranged, generally, by historical period and specific topic. The first floor is primarily a showroom for military vehicles – trucks, tanks, and armoured vehicles that once ferried the People's Army to victory over Royalist, Thai, French and American forces in a continuous period of war spanning from 1945 to 1975.

There are likewise three special presentation rooms, featuring scale models of specific campaigns fought by the People's Army over the course of the war,

including the decisive battle to defend the ancient Plain of Jars in the rainy season of 1972, a critical breaking point in the war that saw the People's Army emerge triumphant over the shattered remnants of the CIA-directed Royalist coalition.

As one gazes upwards at the ornate central pillar of the museum, one feels as though the museum is intentionally designed to impart on the visitor a clear vision of the People's Army, and its role as a central pillar in Lao society.

Its base is clad in a bronze relief, depicting scenes of the mythical birth, ancient life and early struggles of the Lao people. It then transitions into a lit display of photographs of the army in action – the war of resistance against French colonialism and American imperialism – transitioning gradually into modern scenes of humanitarian relief, high-tech military drills, medicine distribution

in rural areas and even sporting events.

The pillar thrusts upwards – from the polished granite floor to a bright white ceiling decorated with recessed lights – as if to emulate the Lao people's own journey, from the hard struggle to survive and achieve freedom to the modern period of rapid whole-society development.

Outside in the courtyard is an even more striking display dedicated to a very different set of artifacts.

The first, a towering monument constructed of deactivated US bombs, memorialises the nine-year indiscriminate bombing campaign unleashed against Laos by the United States from 1964 to 1973, and its enduring effects on the Lao people. In total, over 270 million bombs were dropped on Laos during the "secret war" – roughly 100 lbs. of explosive munitions for every single person living in the country at that

time. Of those bombs, around 81 million (30 per cent) did not detonate on impact and have remained dormant since the war concluded.

During that "secret war" the USA oversaw training and funding for the corrupt Royalist military, for more than 10,000 mercenaries from Thailand (Operation Unity) and for a "secret army" of more than 30,000 Hmong guerillas. Codenamed "Operation Momentum" the effort was allegedly funded, at least partially, by the CIA through the region's lucrative heroin trade.

illegal

In total, around 30,000 Lao civilians were directly killed by the US' illegal bombing campaign, and around 20,000 more have been killed since 1975 by the unexploded bombs that remain scattered throughout the country. Some 750,000 Lao people were displaced by the war, including

400,000 injured – out of a total pre-war population of only around three million. The cluster munitions used against Laos, specifically designed to scatter smaller "bomblets" over wide areas, remain a part of the US military arsenal, despite decades of international pressure to never repeat the generational destruction and terror inflicted on the Lao people.

The second, a collection of seized and destroyed US military equipment, including an American Bell UH-1 Iroquois (Huey) helicopter as well as a McDonnell Douglas F-4 Phantom, and a Republic F-105 Thunderchief, shot down by the Lao People's Army in 1965 and 1968, respectively. The information displayed with the latter specifies that it was "shot down by militia women led by Comrade Bouasy, using a 12.8 mm gun".

Deactivated bombs lay everywhere in heaps in the courtyard. More than merely scrap metal, these macabre trophies commemorate the devastation inflicted on the Lao people, and, more importantly, their defiant resistance.

Beneath the bright faces and the sabai sabai [take it easy] culture of modern Laos' drive for development and prosperity, the stories and memories of those dark times live on. The museum displays the names, photographs and testimonies of many who were directly impacted, including a number of documentary photographs of the innocent civilians – men, women, children, and even Buddhist monks—who con-

tinue to limbs and lives to US imperialism's secret war.

An underlying theme of resistance and perseverance permeates the museum: that the Lao people refuse to be defined by the war and its brutality and that they choose to define themselves, instead, by their national pride and dedication to building a bright future of prosperity and joy for all.

Returning inside the museum and ascending to the second floor, the first display is a no less confronting image: a large, open space, displaying only the polished bust of one man, sitting atop a small pedestal. On the wall directly behind him is arranged another sprawling bronze relief displaying images of Laos' long history of struggle for freedom and independence.

Crowning this depiction shines the emblem of the Lao People's Army. Slightly higher, reaching up towards the bright starry ceiling, unfurl the flags of the free Lao people and the People's Revolutionary Party, respectively, as if reaching up to the heavens.

The scene appears as if intentionally framed to represent a singular encapsulation of the story of Laos' past, present, and intended future. The man at the centre of those carefully-arranged images, whose bust stands intentionally at their focal point, is the late President Kaysone Phomvihane.

His images appear throughout the museum, often in pride of place alongside world leaders like Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh, the DPRK's Kim Il Sung, and Leonid Brezhnev of the Soviet Union; with Lao Party leaders such as Prince Souphanouvong (the Red Prince) and Khamtay Siphandone; and at public events in cities and villages throughout the country.

As a foundational leader of the left-wing Lao Issara (Free Laos) movement, which would form the Lao People's Army in 1949, as well

as the founding General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the founding Prime Minister of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (established on 2nd December 1975), this placement and celebration of "Uncle Kaysone" is neither coincidental nor out of place.

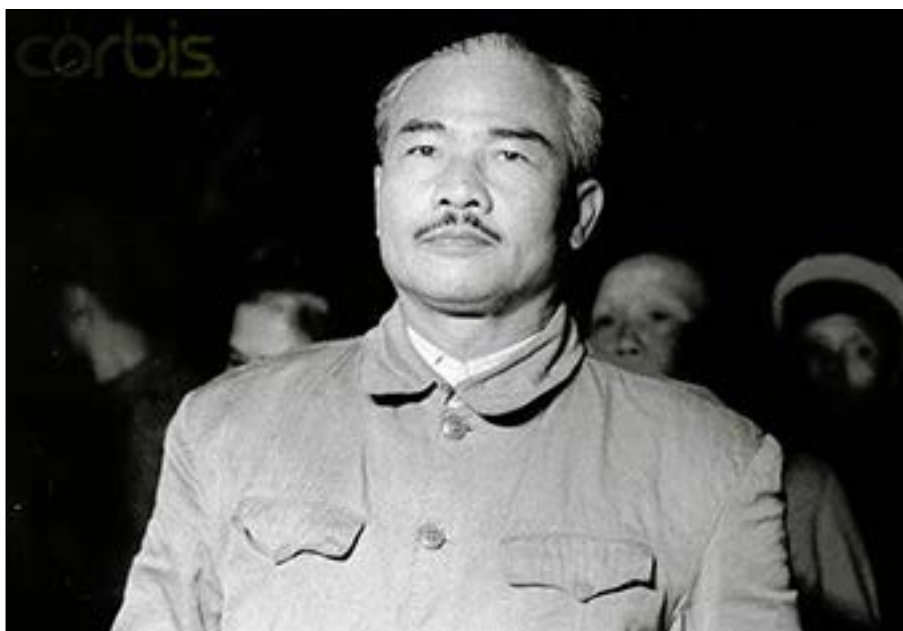
In many ways, the story of Laos' resistance and revival, its rebirth and revolution, all find their common thread in the life of that one half-Vietnamese man, born in Savannakhet, which was officially renamed in his honour in 2005.

From there, the second story of the museum is organised more directly as a retelling of the Lao people's centuries-long struggle to establish and maintain independence and development in a region that has remained fractured for millennia.

This history, for the Lao people, dates back over a thousand years, beginning with the legendary king Khun Lo (who died in 780 AD), who established the first Lao kingdom around what is today the city of Luang Prabang. While the waves of history would continue to ebb and flow for the next thousand years, Khun Lo's lineage would rule the Lao people generally, until 1975, when the last king peacefully stepped down, and the Lao People's Democratic Republic was born.

As presented at the Lao People's Army Museum, the history of the Lao people may be understood as a continuous struggle against oppression. For the Lao People's Army then, theirs is a historic duty: to safeguard their independence, and play a direct role in the development of the Lao nation under the direction of the People's Revolutionary Party, safeguarding and nurturing the People's Democratic Republic.

This historic vision of the Lao People's Army, thus, draws deeper than its formal establishment in 1949, from



Prince Souphanouvong: the Red Prince.

the remnant progressive forces of the exiled Lao Issara under the leadership of the Red Prince and Kaysone Phomvihane. Its birth, on 20th January 1949, is presented as a moment of historic fulfilment that had been in the making for over a thousand years.

continuation

Tracing its roots in this way, the People's Army makes a clear case: that its formation and continuation is a historic necessity of the Lao nation's struggle for "peace, independence, democracy, unity, and prosperity," as the national motto puts it.

It is from this position that the role of the People's Army in mod-

ern Lao life becomes clearer. It is more than just a traditional military; it was established as a movement to fight for Laos' freedom, oriented under the political leadership of the People's Revolutionary Party, and then as the official armed forces of the People's Democratic Republic. Notably, the leading figures in each of these achievements overlapped; primarily led by the Red Prince and Kaysone Phomvihane. In this way, the People's Army plays a special role that touches the very heart of Lao society.

Among the plethora of military hardware on display at the museum are also great treasures of political, scientific,

industrial, educational, and cultural significance: textbooks, cameras, trophies, tokens of Laos' devotion to the international socialist movement, and representations of the Lao people's intangible cultural heritage.

In one display, a small bust of Lenin peers ever-onwards beneath a scarlet banner, emblazoned with golden lettering proclaiming in both Lao and Russian the eternal friendship of the Lao and Soviet peoples.

Another such red banner, emblazoned with the golden hammer and sickle in the style of a Communist Party rests, folded neatly, under another display; this flag was used by the people

of Vientiane when they proclaimed the nation's independence under the Lao Issara movement on 12th October 1945 – some ten years prior to the official founding of the LPRP.

The Lao People's Army makes no mistake, however, that its primary role is to safeguard the Lao nation. A large red plaque spells this out directly, reading (in Lao): "The Lao People's Army, founded, educated, and trained by the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, is a people's army, born from the people, fighting for the rights and interests of the working people of all ethnic groups, and is a potent tool of the People's Party and the working class..."

main force

The Lao People's Army is the main force in safeguarding the fruits of the revolution, ensuring that the country's development is on the right track, improving and perfecting the people's democratic regime, safeguarding the independence, sovereignty, and complete territorial integrity of the nation, ensuring political stability, order, and social peace and security, safeguarding the people's democratic government, protecting the people of all ethnic groups, and the nation's beautiful culture.

It is thus that the army, in many ways, may be said to function as a core pillar of modern Lao society and the Lao People's Army Museum serves as a monument to its vital historic and ongoing role in safeguarding and leading the nation's development, while simultaneously supporting and remaining loyal to the vision of internationalist Marxism-Leninism. As this museum shows, it is the force that defends, supports, and nurtures the continued journey of the Lao nation towards peace, prosperity and freedom.



Kaysone Phomvihane.

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

The Palestinian Communist Party (PCP) expresses its strong condemnation of the aggressive attack launched by the Zionist occupation forces on the ship Hanzala, while it was heading to the Gaza Strip on a humanitarian mission aimed at breaking the siege imposed on our people, and transferring support and aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip who are suffering from the scourge of war, starvation and ethnic cleansing.

This cowardly aggression once again exposes the criminal nature of this entity, which does not hesitate to target any humanitarian or solidarity effort with our Palestinian Arab people, even if it is in the context of civil and peaceful initiatives. The occupation's attack on the Hanzala is not just an interception of a ship, but an attempt to silence the voices of solidarity and obstruct anyone who

seeks to expose its brutal policies in front of the world.

The PCP highly values the participation of solidarity activists from various countries, who have braved risks in order to express their support for the Palestinian people. This broad participation clearly confirms that the Palestinian issue is not a local or regional issue, but rather an international issue that embodies the peoples' struggle for freedom and justice in the face of colonialism and racism.

The party also pays tribute to comrade Hatem Aouini, a member of the political bureau of the National Democratic Socialist Party (Al-Watad) in Tunisia, for his remarkable role in the struggle and his firm positions in defending the Palestinian cause, which stems from an authentic commitment to the struggles of the peoples and their just causes.

The Palestinian Communist Party calls for the intensification of international solidarity action and the widest Arab and international popular pressure campaign to break the siege on the Gaza Strip, hold the occupation accountable for its repeated crimes against civilians, and confront attempts to liquidate the Palestinian cause.

The continuation of the occupation and aggression will not stop our march towards national liberation and return, nor will it dissuade us from continuing the struggle for an independent and sovereign Palestinian state on the entire national territory, with a united Jerusalem as

its capital, and the return of refugees in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy. All greetings to those in solidarity with Palestine,

Glory to the martyrs!
Victory is for the struggling peoples!

Palestinian Communist Party

Dear Comrades

Panic and alarm are rife among European leaders as they start to realise that the the war they provoked in Ukraine has been lost. A tragic and brutal conflict which they and the USA have engineered, financed and armed. Their madness continues as Nato and the neo-cons take steps to escalate the conflict at the very time that fragile peace talks are starting to get underway.

Following the deliberate Western assisted attacks on civilians, by blowing up railway bridges as trains approached, Russia now regards the Kiev regime as a terrorist organisation that illegally seized power. Meanwhile Western arms continue to pour into Ukraine for the proxy war to continue.

The European Union has shown it's true face by supporting the geo-political proxy war provoked and engineered by imperialism in Ukraine. Its leadership, a bizarre collection of clowns, incompetents, Russophobes and warmongers, turns a blind eye to the killing and torture of opponents and journalists in addition to the tragic loss of life on the battlefield.

They ignore the denial of basic rights for Russian speakers and never mention the brutal massacre in Odessa. They also never mention peace. The USA now appears anxious to exit the conflict because they are running out of arms, realise that they have lost and want to initiate another war, this time

with China which they see as a major opponent of their hegemonic policies.

The British government has given its full support to protect Ukraine, which was intended to strengthen Imperialism by breaking up Russia and ultimately threatening China. The proposed welfare cuts were said to be equal to the latest allocation of funding for Ukraine.

It is appalling that the *Morning Star* has sided with the Banderite regime. Its reports differ very little from the bourgeois media with a role which we should all condemn. Its political line shows that the opportunist Communist Party of Britain (CPB) has abandoned proletarian internationalism and serves only to weaken the class struggle. Unless Russophobia is opposed the essential opposition to the war plans of Nato is compromised.

Russia's aims are clear. To provide a safe home for Russian speakers in Ukraine, oppose the malignant expansion of Nato eastwards and to insist upon the elimination of extreme nationalist ideology. The International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity campaign highlights the fact that the entire Western media, including apparently the *Morning Star*, assume that the fascist groups have changed their spots. However a growing number of people are not buying into this one sided version of the war.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Dear Comrades

Political economy is the science of the production, distribution and consumption of wealth. It became a science, thanks to the fusion of two of the greatest minds in history: Marx and Engels. Lenin further developed the science with the emergence of monopoly capitalism, known as imperialism.

Today the science continues to be developed by comrades building socialism, despite the futile efforts of a malignant and moribund imperialism, to prevent the further historical development of the productive forces.

Political economy is a theoretical economic science, but it is a historical science in essence. It is 200 years since the economic crisis of 1825,

Diary

UNTIL 14 SEPT

Peace Museum: Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp exhibition. Thursdays-Sundays 10:00-16:00. Salts Mill, Victoria Road, Saltaire, Shipley BD18 3LA.

UNTIL 14 NOV

Prince Charles Cinema: Films of Andrei Tarkovsky's season. (Soviet film director 1932-86). PCC, 7 Leicester Pl, London WC2H 7BY. Detail and tickets on PCC website.

SAT 9 AUG

New Communist Party: Party Centre, Reception to mark Foundation in 1977. 18:30 London SW11

SUN 10 AUGUST

South Yorkshire Festival. 11:00-17:00, Wortley Hall (The Workers Stately Home), Wortley, Sheffield S35 7DB.

MON 18 - THURS 21 AUG

Stand Up To Racism: Solidarity with Anti-racist campaigner Kwabena Devonish. 10:00, Bristol Crown Court, 9 Small Street, Bristol BS1 1DA

SAT 30 AUG

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Oppose US nuclear weapons in Britain. Vigil 12:00-14:00, RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

MON 1 - FRI 12 SEPT

Campaign Against the Arms Trade. Stop the Arms Fair. Daily Protests outside the DSEI arms fair. Excel Exhibition Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL.

SAT 6 SEPT

Society for the Study of Labour History: Chartism Day: Heritage Quay, Queensgate, Huddersfield HD1 3DH. Book on Eventbrite.

SAT 6 SEPT

Abortion Rights: Counter-protest. 14:00, Millicent Fawcett statue, Parliament Square, London SW1.

SAT 6 SEPT

International Brigade Memorial Trust: Annual Glasgow Commemoration. 11:00, La Pasionaria statue, Custom House Quay, G1 4NP.

SAT 6 SEPT

Refugee: No A Mean City III: Kindness as an Act of Resistance. 16:00-22:00, Stereo, 22 Renfield Lane, Glasgow,

G2 5AR. Book on Ticketailor.com

SUN 7 SEPT

East End Walks: Anti-fascist footprints in London's East End, Guide Walk 10:00-13:00. Book online.

SUN 7 SEPT

Burston Strike School: Annual Rally. From 10:30-16:00, Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk IP22 5TP.

SUN 7-WED 10 SEPT
TUC Congress 2025. Brighton.

SAT 13 SEPT

Stand Up To Racism: Central London demonstration. Details TBA.

SAT 13 SEPT

Wigan Diggers Festival. 11:00-18:30, Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The Wiend, Wigan WN1 1YB.

TUE 16 SEPT

Socialist History Society: Book launch for Mark Shaw's The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. 19:00, Online. Register on SHS website.

WED 17 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Introducing Marx & Marxism. Online introductory course. 19:00. Reister on MML website.

WED 17 SEPT

Stop Trump Coalition: Demonstration, assemble 14:00 Embankment, London for march, details TBA.

SAT 20 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Alan Bush: An Introduction to a Radical Composer, 125th anniversary event. 10:30-16:00, MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU. Book on MML website.

SAT 27 SEPT

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Oppose US nuclear weapons in Britain. Vigil 12:00-14:00, RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

SAT 27 SEPT

Fife TUC: Commemoration for the Fife International Brigade volunteers, 11:00, Memorial stone, Forth Avenue, Kirkcaldy KY2 5PR.

SUN 28 SEPT

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Hands Off Cuba: North West Rally and Fundraiser. 17:45, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool, L1 9BP.

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which Marx later said, in all hitherto history, would have been considered an absurdity. Caused by the over-production of commodities, which the producers of wealth were unable to consume. Marx said the root cause of every capitalist crisis is the chronic lack of purchasing power of the masses.

The extraction of surplus value is the sole motive for capitalist production. Their means of production cannot begin to function unless they have first been converted into capital – into the means for the exploitation of human labour power.

Yet that sole motive creates every economic crisis. Production is a social necessity that Capital strives to remain under strictly private ownership. But Capital creates no value and is only the stored-up produce of labour.

The decisive factor in human history is the growth of the productive forces which renders each exploiting class and their society obsolete. The capitalist class too will be swept away by the full development of the productive forces. Their political supremacy, their monopoly of education and intellectual leadership as a special class of society has long since become not only superfluous, but also economically, politically and intellectually a hindrance to development.

The relations of production, must be compatible with the productive forces, which is the objective law for the development of the human society

Only when the creators of all wealth, own the means of producing it, will they be able to enjoy the full fruits of their labour. And unleash the tremendous, unlimited potential of the productive forces, where every citizen can contribute, with their as yet untapped skills, for the benefit of all society, rather than a parasitic and useless minority.

Kevin Wilcox Walsall

Dear Comrades

As you probably know, the Parliament of the Czech Republic has agreed (not one member of parliament was against it!) to a law criminalising the establishment and promotion of the communist movement. It equates communist ideas with

nazism as well. The law has been confirmed by the president and will come into force on 1st January 2026.

A number of communist and workers' parties have expressed their opposition to this law coming at a time of acute crisis of capitalism. The representatives of the system, the economic and political elite, are thus "preventively" forbidden to question the system that is collapsing.

On our website you can find a number of our articles which are mainly aimed at Czech and Slovak speaking readers. But we are sure that you will be able to deal with them using various current translation tools on: <https://kominternet.cz/>

Veronika Fabiánová,
on behalf of the
editorial board
Collective for
Work, Science
and Culture
Czechia

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

JOHN Swinney's brand-new independence strategy has been mocked on the grounds that it is, more or less, what has been done without success for years. The rival Alba party was predictably scathing but now it appears that many SNP members are also joining in the fun.

With the annual conference coming up the malcontents are flexing their muscles. They want the SNP to declare before the Holyrood election that if pro-independence parties win a majority of votes that alone would be mandate to begin talks for leaving the UK.

This would mean abandoning the existing demand for another referendum on the strength of them securing a majority of seats. However, a significant minority of nationalists openly dislike the idea of a referendum because the Electoral Register includes people born in England.

The SNP have a problem with the electoral system. While constituencies are won on the first past the post system the Regional lists are distributed proportionately. But it is a top-up system which effectively discriminates against the leading party. The work around is to encourage votes for Alba and the Greens to exclude the unionist parties. But there's far too much bad blood for the SNP to recommend that – which would also bizarrely mean the SNP telling people not to vote SNP on the Lists.

Some SNP members are also complaining about proposed rule changes which they say will make it harder for members to challenge the leadership. In March the executive discreetly increased the number of nominations needed to trigger a leadership election from 100 members in 20 branches to 2.5 per cent of party members from 20 branches. With a claimed membership of 58,940 this means that 1,473 nominations are now needed before a contest can be mounted. Former Health Secretary Alex Neil hit the nail on

the head by saying "I am absolutely sure these rules changes were designed to protect Swinney from any realistic attempt to replace him". Now he says "the party constitution and rules require a complete revamp as a matter of urgency". He does not seem to have noticed the leadership have just done that...

Another Farewell

Sadly another youthful hope in the nationalist camp has thrown in the towel. No less a figure than Deputy First Minister Kate Forbes has announced she will stand down at next year's Holyrood election at the ripe old age of 35. The reason given was that she did not want to "miss any more of the precious early years of family life". Given that a child's early years are the most difficult, she must find handling the demands of her three-year-old daughter for more ice cream easier than the demands of her fellow MSPs. Perhaps her greatest triumph after all was to ban the use of plastic straws in Scotland.

The Skye, Lochaber & Badenoch MSP, accountant and Free Church member came to prominence when she was called upon to deliver the Scottish Budget in 2020 literally hours after the Finance Secretary Derek MacKay hurriedly resigned when he was exposed for grooming a sixteen-year-old boy.

She was very narrowly defeated 2023 leadership contest which was rigged in favour of the hapless victor Humza Yousaf. After a spell on the backbenches she returned to grand office as a reward for giving John Swinney a free run. Being a Wee Free ensured she was hated by the Sturgeon faction whose obsession with Gender Reform has damaged the SNP.

She is not alone. In all 37 MSPs have announced their departure: of these 26 are from the SNP. This includes the colourful ex-SNP Independent John Mason as well as Fergus Ewing who might run as an Independent. Five are from Labour, four from the Tories one from the Liberal Democrats, and the Green Presiding Officer.

From Duck Houses to Picture Frames

The 2009 parliamentary expenses scandal did

much to enhance the gaiety of the nation. Stories of Tory MPs claiming for cleaning their moats and a duck house and a Labour Home Secretary claiming her main house was her London-based sister's spare room rather than her family home in the north was most amusing.

Not to be outdone, Holyrood MSPs have been up to the same tricks, albeit at a predictably more mundane level. Unlike Westminster we do not know the amounts or names – only the items which MSPs hopefully claimed for.

These include such essentials to parliamentary life such as garden plant canes, Christmas cards and a premium subscription to Elon Musk's X social media platform. Others unsuccessfully claimed for travel expenses for party-political activity which is clearly out of order.

A minister even attempted to claim travel expenses for attending a ministerial event, which would have already been covered. One narcissistic MSP tried to claim for the cost of picture frames to display motions for constituents. All these are excluded from the increasing bill for parliamentary expenses which rose by £1.89 million to £25.35 million for the 2023-24 financial year.

Music to one's ears

There was mass rejoicing across Scotland with the joyful news that Gordonstoun public school is to become an "All-Steinway" establishment having taken delivery of no less than 17 of the Hamburg firm's famous pianos, including three grand pianos hand-picked from the factory.

These will shared by some 50 piano students but we hope there will be no fights over possession. This will also now help the local community get "more involved in musical events as some of the 17 pianos being replaced have been given to other schools in the area".

It has to be said that the austere Morayshire boarding and day school is a very good one. Old boys include the late Prince Philip and his son, the current King Charles – who apparently hated what he called its "Colditz in kilts" character-building regime of daily morning runs followed by cold showers...

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Vietnam life: should migrants have a voice?

by Alex Reeves

I'M GRUMPY. Maybe it's the heat, perhaps it's that I'm tired from another Vietjet delay. More than likely, it's the dawning realisation that my summer holidays are drawing to a close. Next week I'll be returning to the office and, soon enough, the classroom. No more last-minute flights, mid-week nights at the Bia Hoi or sleeping in late. Back to stationery, lesson planning and a glut of what I'm assured are absolutely necessary meetings.

This is reality and I really shouldn't complain. I get to live and earn well in a country I've chosen, rather than make the best of a hand I've been dealt. Despite not being from these shores, people are kind and welcoming. For the most part, I'm treated

with respect, and there's a distinct element of privilege in both the choice I've made and the way it's gone. That, however, is for an article with a considerably longer word count.

I recently spent a couple of hours in the company of a French-Canadian guy visiting Vietnam, who had absolutely nothing but negative things to say about the migrants he felt were hijacking his culture and taking over his country. According to him, they spoke their own language, practised their own faith and even had the audacity to complain. Outside of the more obvious irony, I was shocked to hear that he was visiting from Thailand, where he's lived for five years as a digital nomad, on concurrent tourist visas, no taxes paid.

Without even



Hanoi's cafe society.

delving into his less-than-flattering commentary on South-East Asia, that's a lot to unpack and I'm not even going to try. Instead, what I found most interesting is an aspect of the conversation I've had with friends here and seen played out in many

a comment section. Should migrants (sorry, 'expats', this is you) have the right to complain in the countries they've moved to? It's a controversial question that people have strong feelings about, and in my experience, one that exposes its fair share of

hypocrisy.

Migrants have their own set of issues and view their new homes through a very different lens than those who were born there. Personally, rather than sitting on the fence, I'm going to say yes, migrants do have the right

to share their grievances. If someone is paying taxes and contributing to society, they have a stake in the place they live, and I'd be uncomfortable with someone in the UK being disallowed a voice because they were 'foreign'.

Off the bat, I think people driving SUVs in urban Hanoi is an arrogant joke. Estate agents misrepresenting apartments is rude, unprofessional and a waste of everyone's time. The inconsistency and bureaucracy of banking here is frankly unnecessary. These opinions aren't to criticise Vietnam, the people, or the way of life – and that's the important distinction. Calling out daily frustrations isn't a critique of culture, it's the reality of living somewhere fully and hoping that one day these petty annoyances will be a thing of the past.

VNS

Museum or Crime Scene?

by Ekaterina Blinova

MANY VISITORS to the British Museum in London have no idea that some of the ancient treasures they admire were looted and stolen.

"During the period of British colonial rule in Egypt the largest thefts of ancient Egyptian artifacts in history took place – amounting to a full-scale plundering of the Nile Valley and the tombs of the pharaohs," says Zahi



Hawas, an Egyptian archaeologist and former Minister of Antiquities.

One of the most famous examples is the Rosetta Stone – the key to deciphering hieroglyphics

– taken from Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte's troops. Equally scandalous was the looting of artefacts from Tutankhamun's tomb by Lord Carnarvon, the sponsor of the

excavation.

The English archaeologist Howard Carter gifted part of treasures from Tutankhamun's tomb to Lord Carnarvon and Egyptologist Alan Gardiner, and

a Nefertum statue smuggled into the tomb of Ramses II is also now in the museum. The Rosetta Stone, found by French soldiers in Rashid in 1799, was handed to

Britain – along with other artifacts – under the 1801 Treaty of Alexandria after Napoleon's defeat. But none of the colonial powers had any right to dispose of Egypt's heritage says Hawas.

The British Museum dedicates seven entire halls to ancient Egyptian exhibits – from statues and mummies to jewellery and medical papyri. British museums now hold more than 100,000 Egyptian artefacts. All of them were taken illegally, Hawas insists. "Scholars and public figures are calling for an end to the silence surrounding this massive cultural theft".

Sputnik

Revolution is the supreme act of politics

by Oscar Sánchez Serra

FREDERICK Engels died on 5th August 1895 but he lives on in the emancipation of the people.

“The general, as his friends called him, has left us. But the battle that Marx and Engels led as chiefs of the innumerable army of the proletariat continues. Encouraged by their ideas, by their slogans, the proletarians of all countries have united, will continue to strengthen their union and will finally win”.

Those were the words of Paul Lafargue, in front of the coffin of Frederick Engels. The Cuban physician and socialist thinker, as is known, was not only a disciple and son-in-law of Karl Marx, but also his companion in struggle. Engels, born in 1820, was the faithful friend of Marx. Together



Marx and Engels.

er they wrote *The Holy Family*; *The German Ideology* and the *Communist Manifesto* while his works include *Anti-Dühring*; *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*; *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of German Classical Philosophy*

and *The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man*.

It was his intellectual greatness, wrapped in a revolutionary and revolutionary thought – the dialectical materialism that is one of the essential methodological platforms of the social

sciences. His *Dialectics of Nature* attests to this.

The Cuban academic, Dr Hassán Pérez Casabona, highlights a singular edge of the thinker's genius, whose validity speaks of an advanced reasoning, when he observes that Engels stimulated the prepa-

ration in multiple disciplines of those called to develop the changes that would banish oppression.

“The bourgeois revolutions of the past only needed the universities to supply them with lawyers, the best raw material for the formation of their political leaders, but for the emancipation of the working class, doctors, engineers, chemists, agronomists and other specialists will also be needed, since it is a matter of mastering the direction, both of the political machine and of all social production, and this is not achieved with sound phrases, but with firm knowledge” reads the message Engels sent in 1893 to the Congress of socialist students.

When today we talk about science, research, innovation and research and development cy-

cles, Engels was already ahead of us in time, placing his light on the young people who, once again, are the force that will make history continue.

Fidel Castro saw that light, and unleashed the torrent of knowledge that carried the Cuban Revolution, from the programme conceived in Moncada, materialised in the Literacy Campaign in 1961 – the embryo of the country of scientists that he said Cuba had to be.

The value of that human capital, of the knowledge of collective intelligence, is the essence of the model of the country we are today, heir to the preaching of Martí, Lenin, Marx and Engels, who today, 130 years after his physical departure, is felt in his conception of the revolutionary deeds: revolution is the supreme act of politics.

REVIEW Superman indeed!

by Ben Soton

THERE HAVE been many previous adaptations of Superman. Most notably Christopher Reeve in the 1980s with Margot Kidder as Lois Lane and the 1990s version, *Superman and Lois*, where Superman (played Dean Cain) and Lois Lane (played by Teri Hatcher) are a married couple.

This Superman, played by David Corenswet, is much more vulnerable. At one point in the film he has to be rescued by Lois Lane, played by Rachel



Brosnahan. Superman is now one of a number of ‘Metahumans’. The term originates from the Greek word Meta, meaning above; essentially meaning above human. In other words humans with superpowers.

The existence of the Metahumans, along with his canine best friend Krypto, also show this Superman more as part of a team

than a lone actor.

The makers of the film made extensive use of CGI and increasingly AI. The special effects are amazing, which is why the film should be viewed on the big screen; almost justifying the cost of the ticket.

In this film the super-villain Lex Luther, who resembles the real-life Elon Musk, is played by Nicholas

Hoult. Luther, a multi-billionaire tech-owner manages to imprison Superman in another dimension and almost destroys the universe.

Like Superman, Luther has had many previous adaptations, notably Gene Hackman who played the villain alongside Christopher Reeve. Interestingly Hackman's version of Luther lived underneath the Metrop-

olis subway; while the modern version controls half the planet and beyond – perhaps an acceptance that the West is run by crooks.

In the film Superman and his allies fight Luther and prevent genocide. What could be wrong with that?

The devil is in the detail. If in order to defeat the likes of Musk and for that matter Netanyahu we

require the intervention of superheroes, or ‘metahumans’, what hope do mere mortals have of defeating them?

But the real Elon Musk does not have his own private universe, unless you count what's inside his own head, and it does not require Metahumans to defeat him.

I have heard that Zionists are boycotting this film; they claim the prevention of genocide by Superman, or more specifically allies of Superman, is a reference to the genocide in Gaza.

However the Israelis say they are not committing genocide; in which case why are the Zionists so techy on the matter. I will say no more...enjoy the film, then join us in the struggle for a better world!

European dockers block arms shipments to Israel

by Cameron Harrison

ITALIAN dockworkers successfully blocked shipments of military cargo bound for Israel to be used in their genocidal war against Palestine. The Unione Sindacale di Base (USB), along with their union siblings from the All-Workers Militant Front (PAME) in Greece, held demonstrations and refused to unload cargo at their ports as the ship made its way through the region.

The USB declared victory at the beginning of August, when *COSCO Shipping Pisces* agreed to return three containers of military equipment to Singapore, their point of origin. The ship agreed that they will not unload at either the ports of Genoa or La Spezia. The decision came after the union announced a 24-hour strike for 5th August at the PSA Genova Pra' terminal.

The USB produced a manifesto, *Labour Rejects War*, signed by dozens of associations, jurists, scholars and peace movement leaders. They affirm that military operations are not among the essential services protected by Italian law.

"We will not work for war," the USB stated, invoking Italy's Law 146/1990 which bans arms exports to conflict zones. "War operations are not essential services, and a strike is legitimate if it serves to defend collective security and constitutional order," the union said. "Stopping arms is not just a political choice, it is a right."

The union has since organised an international dockers assembly to be held in September



Dockworkers and allies against arms to Israel in Salerno, Italy.

in Genoa to coordinate further actions including preparing for a sector-wide strike if necessary.

Earlier on its voyage, the ship was met with protests by Greek dockers in Piraeus, organised by the ENED-EP dockers union and PAME, before it reached Genoa. They called on mass demonstrations to prevent the unloading of the military-grade steel on the ship *Ever Golden* headed for Israel. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) reported that the contents of the ship were loaded onto the *COSCO Shipping Pisces* which was then blocked in Italy.

clear example

"This is a clear example of how workers around the world can express practical solidarity with people resisting the imperialists' unjust wars, of how they can strengthen their struggle as a united front against the merchants of war," PAME declared.

These workers' actions continue a growing movement of port workers refusing to

handle arms shipments to be used in Israel's genocidal war on the Palestinian people. These actions build on several years of labour organising against war and the supplying of weapons to Israel, dating back to the start of the war in 2023.

refused to load

In France, workers at the port in Fos-sur-Mer near Marseilles, led by the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), refused to load 14 tons of weapons components destined for Israel Military Industries, a subsidiary of Elbit Systems in June. The CGT said the move made clear its refusal to "participate in the ongoing genocide orchestrated by the Israeli government".

"We are very proud of this action led by our comrades, and which is part of the CGT's long internationalist tradition for peace," CGT General Secretary Sophie Binet said.

The class-struggle powered World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has publicly endorsed these workplace actions. But the

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has remained silent. This, of course, highlights an ongoing divide within the labour movement over the role of trade unions and their relationship to questions of imperialism and war.

"The only force that can stop this painful course and put an end to imperialist and Zionist aggression is the reaction and resistance of the peoples with the working class in the front line," the WFTU declared. "The WFTU has from the very first moment clearly and unequivocally condemned the aggression of the murderous Israeli state. 'We are proud that under the banners of our Federation millions of workers around the world have mobilised and are mobilising in solidarity with the people of Palestine for a free Palestine and an independent Palestinian state,' the federation said. 'For the progressive, anti-imperialist forces in the world today it is an urgent duty to defend the life and benefits of the people, the peace threatened by imperialist aggression'."

People's World (USA)

Russian missiles for Cuba and Venezuela?

THERE IS growing media speculation regarding the possible deployment of Russian Oreshnik missile systems to Cuba and Venezuela. But Maria Zakharova, the official spokesperson for the Russian Foreign Ministry, said that this appears to reflect "the private opinions of individual experts expressing personal viewpoints".

The idea of deploying Russian missile systems in Latin America was recently voiced by Alexander Stepanov, a military expert from the Institute of Law and National Security of the Russian Presidential Academy (RANEP). "Stationing weapons such as the Oreshnik system in distant countries like Venezuela or Cuba could serve as a powerful tool for projecting Russia's global military presence while protecting the sovereignty of our allies," he says.

On 1st August President Vladimir Putin announced that the first Oreshnik unit had been delivered to the military. During a meeting with Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, he revealed that specialists have already

selected a site for the system in Belarus, and preparations for deployment are actively underway, to be completed by the end of 2025.

Putin previously revealed that the Oreshnik was used in combat for the first time in November 2024. He praised the system's speed and performance as a matter of national pride and emphasised its role as a new guarantor of Russia's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

"There are no existing air defence systems capable of intercepting the Oreshnik" Putin stated. "Even interceptor missiles based in Poland can't reach it. Within seconds, the warheads separate – the train has left the station. There's simply no chance of stopping them".

Alexei Zhuravlyov, the Deputy Chairman of the State Duma's Defence Committee, supported the deployment of the Oreshnik in Belarus, stating that it brings Russia's strategic capability closer to European capitals and serves to "cool hot heads". He added that it is essential to shift the balance of deterrence toward Europe.

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