

THE SOCIALIST CORRESPONDENT

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HOW SOCIAL PROGRESS WAS CRUSHED

Military coup - Chile 1973
US invasion - Grenada 1983

Niger - France and the US manoeuvre to keep control **P4**

BAE Systems - vital to British state interests **P18**

NATO or non-alignment? **P21**

World views and events **P24**

Poland does US bidding in Europe **P27**

NATO's cyber warfare **P30**

CONTENTS

- 4 Niger – France and the US manoeuvre to keep control**
■ by Alex Davidson
- 8 CHILE - 50 years on from the coup**
■ by Dan Morgan
- 13 Britain and Chile's 9/11**
■ by Pablo Navarrete
- 15 Grenada - Revolution and Invasion 40 years on**
■ by Paul Sutton
- 18 BAE Systems - vital to British state interests**
■ by John Moore
- 21 NATO or non-alignment?**
■ by Gary Lefley
- 24 A review of world views and events**
■ by Pat Turnbull
- 27 Poland does US bidding in Europe**
■ by Simon Korner
- 30 NATO's cyber warfare**
■ by Claire Bailey
- 32 BOOK REVIEW**
Mission to Moscow
■ by Milly Cunningham
- 35 Tory infighting and Starmer's flawed strategy**
■ by Frieda Park

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The world continues to change rapidly - exactly where some of these developments will lead is hard to predict. However the move towards a multipolar world and resistance to the diktats of the United States and other major powers is continuing. Another thing is clear – the US and its allies/rivals will not allow their power to be diminished without a fight.

Niger

An example of resistance to the West has been the spate of military coups across west Africa in the last few years. In *Niger – France and the US manoeuvre to keep control*, Alex Davidson argues that, “Each of these coups was led by military officers angered by the presence of French and US troops and by the permanent economic crises inflicted on their countries.” He takes a closer look at the situation in Niger spelling out both the poverty in the country alongside the exploitation of its natural resources, especially uranium, vital to the French nuclear power industry. France is the historic colonial power and has used its control of the currency in west Africa, the CFA franc, and all the usual tactics of imperialism, to maintain its dominance in the region. However, France is being challenged by the US. Both have an extensive military presence in Niger.

Unsurprisingly sanctions have been imposed and, with the encouragement of France, the Economic Community of West Africa is threatening military intervention. The infamous Victoria Nuland, Acting US Deputy Secretary of State has been deployed in the region to promote US interests and gather forces to try to intervene.

Drive to war

The malign effect on Britain of the militarisation of the economy is dealt with by John Moore in *BAE Systems - vital to British state inter-*

ests. BAE systems manufactures armaments, warships, tanks and war planes. It is raking in huge profits from the war in Ukraine – in 2022 it made £2.5 billion, up 12.5%. The company is critical to the projection of British power. As such it has strong links to politicians, universities and think tanks. These links, which are spelled out by Moore, help it promote its interests and he paints a picture of the British military-industrial complex at work.

The reliance on the arms industry for skilled working class jobs also has its effects ideologically. This could be seen at last year’s TUC which narrowly passed a motion in favour of more “defence” spending, reversing its previous policy. But the Tories already plan to double spending by 2030 at a time when working class people are suffering as wages are not keeping up with the soaring cost of living and with our infrastructure and public services falling apart.

Are the people’s interests best served by sacrificing their living standards to the military build-up or would they be better served by Britain taking a different path? Gary Lefley makes the case against the NATO war machine and for non-alignment as a foreign policy in, *NATO or non-alignment?* As the world is shifting, shouldn’t we consider abandoning an alliance which only promotes imperialism and war, very different from the people’s interests, and join developments, such as BRICS, which emphasise collaboration and which challenge US dominance.

Chile and Grenada

A concrete example which exposes the myth that Britain and the US stand for democracy is the coup in Chile. We remember the 50th anniversary of this event in articles by Dan Morgan and Pablo Navarrete. In *Britain and Chile’s 9/11* Navarrete

exposes evidence that it was not only the United States that was trying to undermine Salvador Allende and Popular Unity. Even before Allende was elected attempts were underway to undermine Chilean democracy and Britain played a key part in that.

Meanwhile Morgan considers the history of Popular Unity and asks if it could have succeeded in, *Chile - 50 years on from the coup*. Chile faced external enemies and a fascist right wing at home willing to use brutal force to crush democracy. The viciousness of that onslaught and the ultimate retreat of “constitutionalists” within the armed forces was something Popular Unity was ill prepared for. In addition there was disunity within its own ranks and with the ultra left following tactics which lost the government support. This was compounded by provocations engineered by the United States and destabilisation caused by sanctions. Along with the actions of the right within the country this led to economic chaos and shortages of essentials. The US believed that it needed to crush Popular Unity and roll back the advances made under Allende. And so it sponsored the military coup that then led to the torture, disappearance, imprisonment and murder of so many Chileans. Morgan concludes that the unity of progressive forces is essential to left advance.

This is a similar conclusion that can be drawn from Paul Sutton’s, *Grenada - Revolution and Invasion 40 years on*. Whilst the United States invaded Grenada to defeat the revolution there, divisions in the movement made it harder to resist imperialism. The progressive policies of the New Jewel Movement and the independent course being pursued by the Grenadian government made it a target as the US sought to extinguish another socialist threat in the Caribbean. It would not tolerate another Cuba.

NIGER France and the US manoeuvre to keep control

by Alex Davidson

In Niger on 26th July 2023 Mohamed Bazoum was ousted as President and detained by the Presidential Guard. The National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland (Conseil National pour la Sauvegarde de la Patrie or CNSP) took over the government of the country. It has representatives from all branches of the country's armed forces in its leadership with Brigadier General Tchiani as President of the Council.

The CNSP was met with an outpouring of joy and masses of people came out to show their support. The demonstrations also showed the great antipathy towards France and its control of the country for more than a century. One of the first acts of the CNSP was the cancellation of 5 military cooperation agreements signed with France between 1977 and 2020.

Threat of war

The Economic Community of West Africa (Ecowas) imposed sanctions and issued a deadline for Niger's President Bazoum to be re-installed otherwise it would intervene militarily. The deadline came and went but ECOWAS continues to threaten military intervention.

The US has the largest drone base in the world at Agadez in the north of the country, as well as 5 other military bases, and French special forces are garrisoned in the city of Arlit on behalf of the uranium mining company Orano. France also has an important air base near the capital, Niamey, which would be critical for any invasion by Ecowas. Neither



PHOTO BY FREDDIE EVERETT

Things have changed since December last year when US Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin met with former Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum (second left at the table) and the presidents of Djibouti and Somalia

France, with 1500 troops, nor the United States, with 1000 troops, are keen to directly intervene with their own military forces. They prefer proxies to go to war on their behalf. For example, in 2021, France and the United States protected their private companies, Total Energies and ExxonMobil, in Mozambique by asking the Rwandan army to intervene militarily.

France has been encouraging Ecowas to invade on their behalf and the US dispatched Victoria Nuland, Acting Deputy Secretary of State, to Niger shortly after the coup. This was her third visit in 2 years and Secretary of State Blinken visited earlier in March underlining the importance of Niger to the US. Nuland has a history of organising the overthrow of those the US

doesn't like. In a media conference by video call during her visit she said, "we wanted to speak frankly to the people responsible to this challenge to the democratic order to see if we could try to resolve these issues diplomatically, if we could get some negotiations going, and also to make absolutely clear what is at stake in our relationship and the economic and other kinds of support that we will legally have to cut off if democracy is not restored. You have probably seen we have already had to pause our assistance." [1]

Nigeria, which is currently chair of Ecowas, will provide most of the soldiers of the invading force. However, the Nigerian Senate voted against military intervention and there have been mass protests in

Nigeria and other Ecowas countries against the use of force. The African Union imposed sanctions but has said that it wouldn't intervene militarily. Mali and Burkina Faso, currently both suspended by Ecowas, stated that they would regard an ECOWAS military intervention as a declaration of war and would come to Niger's aid. An Ecowas invasion could plunge the region into war. At the time of going to press Ecowas has so far not invaded.

The new government of Niger gave the French Ambassador 48 hours to leave the country, but he remains there under the orders of Macron as do the 1500 French troops. In 2022 Mali ordered the withdrawal of French troops and they were relocated to Niger. The CNSP closed Niger airspace which means that the US cannot fly its drones nor planes from its base at Agadez in the north of the country which is the largest drone base in the world. How long the US will be willing to accept this remains to be seen.

The coup in Niger follows similar coups in Mali (2021), Burkina Faso (2022) and Guinea (2021) and has been followed by the unseating (August 2023) of the 55 year long corrupt Bongo dynasty in Gabon kept in place for all those years by the French. Each of these coups was led by military officers angered by the presence of French and US troops and by the permanent economic crises inflicted on their countries.

This region of Africa – the Sahel – is facing a multitude of problems, including desiccation of the land due to the climate catastrophe; the rise of Islamic militancy arising from the 2011 NATO war in Libya; the increase in smuggling networks to traffic weapons, people and drugs across the desert; the appropriation of natural resources, including uranium and gold by western companies; and the entrenchment of Western military forces through the construction of bases and their operation.

Niger has a population of some 25 million, of whom about 70% are under 25 years of age. More than 40% of the population are below the poverty line and 30% of children under 5 years of age are underweight. It is a poverty-stricken country with a young generation disillusioned by a raft of issues and unwilling to passively accept a shortage of jobs, perceived high levels of corruption and privilege among the elite, manipulation of the electoral process, and at the persistent influence of France.

French Colonialism

During the imperialist Scramble for Africa in the years, 1880-1900, France colonised vast parts of western, eastern and central Africa. It continues its control of these so-called independent countries through a particular brand of French neo-colonialism.

After the abolition of slavery, huge "reparations" were paid to the French former slave owners. These were used in part to establish colonial banks in Africa to ensure that French domination would endure post-slavery by maintaining a neo-colonial arrangement. This involved the deliberate underdeveloping of the colonies' economies, their forced reliance on raw material exports, and a French monopoly on shipping, exports, and imports.

CFA franc

The Communauté Financière Africaine (CFA) franc was the currency designed by France to ensure French control survived colonialism's official demise. The CFA franc is colonialism repackaged. The Franc of the French Colonies in Africa (FCFA) during colonial times became with independence the Franc of the Financial Community of Africa (FCFA) in West Africa. The French government is a specialist at reframing colonial structures using new names.

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ECOWAS countries

When Guinea decided to issue its own banknotes and currency in 1960, France organised a sabotage operation to destabilise the new country, sending in its secret service agents, flooding the economy with false banknotes, and disrupting everything. This sent a clear message to other countries.

In the CFA franc system, the African central banks have for decades been obliged to deposit a large proportion (50%) of their foreign currency reserves into the French treasury. The CFA franc leads to massive capital outflows from the former colonies. Membership of the franc zone is synonymous with poverty and under-employment, as evidenced by the fact that 11 of its 15 members are classed as Least Developed Countries (LDCs), while the remainder (Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon) have all experienced long-term economic decline.

IMF diktat

The CFA was devalued in 1994 at the instigation of France and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This meant that as of January 1994, 100 CFA francs equalled 1 French franc, instead of the previous ratio of 50

CFA francs to 1 French franc. This meant that CFA franc zone countries were now selling their products for half as much but were buying products from other countries for twice as much. This led to a surge in prices and inflation. People's purchasing power declined and it became difficult for ordinary citizens to make ends meet and the West got the former French colonies raw materials at knock-down prices.

The IMF doesn't hide its policy as it publicly states "The IMF policy encourages governments to couple devaluation with sound macroeconomic and structural adjustment policies. The former includes prudent fiscal and monetary policies and an appropriate exchange rate regime. The latter includes trade liberalisation, elimination of price controls, diversification of agriculture, reduction of government workforces and spending, and privatisation of state-owned industries". [2] The effects of this neo-liberal policy have had extremely negative consequences on the lives of working people in the metropolitan capitalist countries. It has had a devastating effect on the peoples in the global south.

France stopped using the franc in 2002 when it switched to the Euro. However, 14 former French colonies continued to use the CFA, which gives huge advantages to France given that some 50% of the reserves of these countries having to be held in the French Treasury. An excellent arrangement for French capitalism.

To uphold the CFA franc France has never hesitated to jettison heads of state tempted to withdraw from the system. Many were removed from office or killed in favour of more compliant and corrupt leaders. Even the BBC has now admitted this, "No-one disputes that there was indeed a long period - roughly corresponding to the Cold War - when France used a certain amount of skulduggery and military muscle to further its interests in *La Françafrique*". [3]

Uranium

At the centre of this neo-colonial arrangement in Niger is the Société des Mines de l'Air (Somair), a joint venture between Niger and France, which owns and operates the uranium industry. 85% of Somair is owned by France's Atomic Energy

Commission and two French companies while only 15% is owned by Niger's government.

Niger is the world's seventh largest uranium producer producing over 5% of the world's uranium and it possesses Africa's highest grade uranium ores. Some 70% of France's energy comes from the nuclear industry powered by Niger's uranium. Orano, a French state-owned nuclear energy company has major stakes in three uranium mines in Niger. It was formerly known as Areva and has operated in Niger for about 50 years. It is the second largest uranium producer in the world and has a revenue of €7 billion. Niger receives a pittance for its uranium which is exported for enrichment to France.

Military occupation

The western powers' military bases and troops are presented as partners in the fight against Islamic militants. The truth is that the western military is there to protect western economic interests and will use jihadists to undermine the new regime as they have done elsewhere like Afghanistan.

The US base (Air Base 201) at Agadez on the southern fringe of the Sahara Desert, about 500 miles north-east of the Nigerien capital Niamey, is not simply a military outpost but is the linchpin of the US military's archipelago of bases in North and West Africa and a key part of America's wide-ranging intelligence, surveillance, and security of its assets in the region. Air Base 201, or AB 201, was built at a cost of \$110 million and costs \$20-30 million each year to maintain. It is home to Space Force personnel involved in high-tech satellite communications, Joint Special Operations Air Detachment facilities, and a fleet of drones including MQ9 Reapers. [4] The US also has bases at Niamey, Arlit, Dirkou, Diffa and Ouallam in the country. In all the US Africa Com-

mand (AFRICOM) has 29 bases on the African continent.

Imperialist rivalry

There are differences among the western imperialist powers over how to react to the coup in Niger. *Le Figaro* reported, "After the putsch in Niger, France fears being overtaken by its American ally". Based on comments from a French diplomat, the paper reported the US "did the exact opposite of what we thought they would do," by sending Acting Deputy Secretary of State Victoria Nuland to meet with the coup leaders. The article begins with the line, "With allies like that, we don't need enemies." The paper summarised its source's view that the "Americans simply want to keep their bases in the region above all else. Washington will not hesitate to drop a demand for what he called constitutional legality to achieve this goal... The United States, like all our allies for that matter, has a habit of letting us take the hits."

This assessment found support in a CNN article which reported, "The Biden administration is searching for ways to keep US forces and assets in Niger to continue anti-terror operations, even as it becomes increasingly unlikely that the military junta that overthrew the country's government last month will cede power back to the democratically elected president."

These differences and jostling for position among the imperialists may provide some time and limited negotiating space for the National Council for the Safeguard of the Homeland. However, exchanging a French patron for an American master may be the offer on the table.

The continuing support of the people will be severely tested as food insecurity will grow as a consequence of sanctions and there will be efforts made by the US and France to stir up opposition.

Victoria Nuland during her video call from Niamey said, "So today we had a chance first to sit with a broad cross-section of Nigerian civil society. These are long-time friends of the United States. They are journalists. They are democratic activists. They are human rights activists. A number of them I had met on previous trips, as had the Secretary. And so we had a frank exchange about the situation here." [5] So, the West and their agents on the ground will be stirring up opposition and the western mainstream media will be parroting the buzzwords of "democratisation", "empowerment", "cooperation", and "engagement with the young", whilst bleating about the malign influence of Russia and China in Africa.

The unity of the CNSP will also be tested as the West seeks to create wedges by various means including sanctions, bribery, promises of safety and amnesty, and the threat of war by overwhelmingly superior forces. The main aim of the imperialist West will be to safeguard their economic interests and continue the rape of Africa.

[1] <https://eg.usembassy.gov/acting-deputy-secretary-of-state-victoria-nuland-on-the-situation-in-niger/>

[2] <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fabric/backgrnd.htm>

[3] Schofield, Hugh, *Macron looks on as France's Africa policy crumbles*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-66668094/2/9/23>

[4] The MQ-9 Reaper is the primary offensive strike unmanned aerial vehicle for the US Air Force.

[5] <https://eg.usembassy.gov/acting-deputy-secretary-of-state-victoria-nuland-on-the-situation-in-niger/>

CHILE

50 years on from the coup

by Dan Morgan

On the 11th September 1973, Chile changed dramatically and profoundly. It was plunged into a long period of mass arrests, torture and imprisonments, with selective disappearance and murder of opponents of fascism. Following the coup, Chile was the first place where capitalism with elements of state intervention and welfare was replaced by harsh neoliberal capitalism. This was only possible at the point of a gun, the guns of the police and armed forces, with no mercy for any opposition.

The first aim, however, was to smash the popular movement that had created a threat to capitalism itself – Popular Unity, the base for the government led by President Salvador Allende. How did this movement become such a threat, and was it possible that it could have succeeded?

The International Context

In 1970 the world was still in the period of de-colonisation. There was armed struggle in Portugal's African colonies; South Africa was fighting Apartheid; newly independent countries had formed the non-aligned movement, and several of them spoke of moving to socialist or 'non-capitalist' development. The Soviet Union and other socialist countries still had a strong appeal for these forces, and were supporting several movements for national or economic liberation.

In Latin America the Cuban revolution inspired many sections of the masses across the region. Anti-imperialist feeling was running

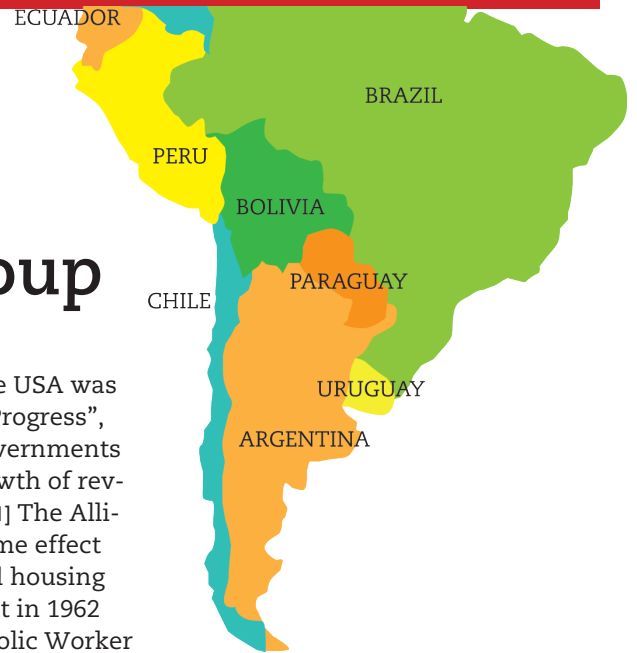
high. One response of the USA was Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress", aid given to reformist governments to try and hinder the growth of revolutionary movements. [1] The Alliance for Progress had some effect in Chile. I lived in a small housing estate of 160 houses, built in 1962 by a cooperative of 'Catholic Worker Youth', with the crucial help of a million dollars.

The Chilean context

Prior to the victory of Allende and Popular Unity, Chile had a strong tradition of class struggle. The Communist Party in Chile had strong roots in the working class. The Socialist Party was formed in 1933, after a short-lived 'Socialist Republic' led by officers from the Air Force. It won support in the working class, although its roots were deeper in the progressive and revolutionary middle strata. Allende was a founder of the Socialist Party but always saw the need for communist-socialist unity.

Chile elected a Popular Front government in 1938 which improved education and started some industrialisation. However, with the start of the cold war in 1947 a president elected with strong communist support banned the party at the behest of Washington.

Allende stood unsuccessfully for President in 1952 and almost won in 1958. By 1964, millions of dollars had been spent to promote the reformist Christian Democrat Party (PDC), and its promise of a 'Revolution in Liberty'. Thus its leader Eduardo Frei was elected, and Allende suffered a severe defeat.



Throughout this time the class struggle continued. Some reforms did take place, notably the agrarian reform law in 1967 and a sort of half-way house 'Chileanisation' of the big copper mines. For the first time rural workers had the right to form legal unions and as land reform progressed, more and more unions were created – dominated either by the PDC or by left parties. Repression of workers' movements continued however, and the people wanted more. There were successful struggles by university and secondary students for education reforms. There was the huge progressive cultural movement, especially in music with the rise of Victor Jara, Quilapayun, Inti-Illimani, Patricio Manns, Violeta Parra and her children, and a host of others. All left-wing, and many of them communists. Important sections of the PDC itself moved to the left, and many of its youth section broke away to form the MAPU party.

Popular Unity

So in 1969 the Chilean left had experience of winning battles, the political climate was good, and there was the basis for a broad movement of the organised working class and progressive, often anti-imperialist middle strata. Popular Unity – Unidad Popular (UP) – was

formed in 1969. Following the strategy of the Communist Party, this was an alliance based on the communist and socialist parties but including the middle-class Radical Party, which had moved to the left, social democrats, and MAPU.

The Popular Unity programme was for progressive reforms, with the idea of forming a solid majority for moving to socialism, including a new constitution and structural change. It was anti-imperialist, so all natural resources would be nationalised. Cuba and all the socialist countries were to be recognised and economic relations

developed. It was anti the big land owners, latifundistas, so agrarian reform would be speeded up and completed. It was anti-oligarchy, so strategic industries would be nationalised, with strong workers' participation in management. The election programme was one of reforms – not revolutionary changes but important measures to improve democracy and people's lives.

In the 1970 election, Allende faced right wing Alessandri, (president 1958 to 1964) and the Christian Democrat Radomiro Tomic. The CIA poured money into the campaign to stop Allende but were not so keen

on Tomic, whose programme was not that different from Allende's. So Alessandri was promoted to beat Allende. But on September 4th Allende got 36% of the vote, Alessandri 34% and Tomic 28%. [2] There was no second round vote, but the Congress had to ratify Allende's victory.

US President, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger met immediately to plan how to stop this – an all-out effort. When Allende took office, the famous phrase was spoken: "Make the economy scream!". Millions of dollars were poured into the destabilisation effort, including for the leading pro-imperialist newspaper, *El Mercurio*, also radio and other media, fascist organisation and strikes etc. [3] [4] One result was the assassination of René Schneider, the Army Commander-in-Chief, to try to provoke a military coup. He was a 'constitutionalist' general, and himself strongly opposed the idea of a coup to prevent Allende becoming president.

Then PDC congressmen made Allende sign a 'Statute of Constitutional Guarantees' aimed at limiting his room to make major changes in government, as a condition for getting their votes.

Victory

So eventually, on 4th November, Allende was sworn into office. Another 'constitutionalist' general, Carlos Prats, became army Commander-in-Chief. Despite severe US economic sanctions, the first year went well and wages increased substantially. Increased demand led to industries working at capacity, and unemployment fell.

The 40 measures of the UP program began to be implemented. The most notable – half a litre of milk a day (usually as powder) for all school children. Allende, as a doctor, knew the harm done by malnutrition. A wide-ranging agreement with the CUT, the trade union centre was

Statue of Salvador Allende in the Plaza de la Constitución, Santiago de Chile



PHOTO BY RICHARD ESPINOZA

one of the first things. As the song said: "Because this time it's not about changing a President, the people will build a very different Chile." The cultural atmosphere was amazing, with the new song movement especially important. The Ramona Parra Brigades brought a new style to political art on the walls of the cities – black tracing filled with bright primary colours. Over 10 million books, new and classics, sold for the price of a pack of cigarettes (population of Chile about 11 million).

The constitution was reformed to make all natural resources property of the nation – a unanimous vote, reflecting popular pressure. The big copper mines, the source of most export earnings, were nationalised. In the municipal elections of April 1971 Popular Unity won a majority – just over 50%. The banks were taken into state control, using an old legal mechanism of government 'intervention'.

Many other industries that passed into the social area of the economy due to pressure from the workers. A government 'interventor' was appointed as general manager, and management boards were elected from the workers. In the traditionally right wing south of the country, wood and forestry workers took over a plywood factory and 24 huge estates with their forests and sawmills. For two years 3,500 workers created the Panguipulli Forestry and Woodworking Complex. With the government 'interventor', the workers' council managed everything in 4,200 square kilometres [5], an enormous area. The trade union leaders were communists, socialists and MIR (Left Revolutionary Movement, a small Guevarist party). MIR refused to take part in the management. Production was maintained, employment increased and conditions greatly improved. The repression after the coup was intense, dozens of the activists were massacred.

International Solidarity

As well as many Latin Americans who came to work, the socialist camp provided important solidarity. Fifteen thousand tractors were sold on very favourable terms: 5,000 from Czechoslovakia, 5,000 from Byelorussia and 5,000 from Rumania. The Rumanian ones were not of high quality but a neighbour of mine still keeps one running. The USSR provided a factory to make panels for building flats and a few blocks were completed and are still in use. It also provided two trawlers, which meant that the inland town where I lived had frozen fish for the first time ever.

Middle class opposition

The big increase in purchasing power soon led to shortages. Many big farmers killed a lot of their cattle from fear and in revenge for Allende's election, so after a short time beef became scarce. Queues became common. The first demonstrations occurred in Santiago in October, well-off women deigned to come down to the city centre from the 'barrio alto' – the high suburbs literally and figuratively – bringing their domestic servants with them.

The year 1971 saw a fateful event. In June an important leader of the PDC, Edmundo Perez Zujovic, was assassinated by a tiny, unknown ultra-left group. It had almost certainly been infiltrated by the CIA – two of its members immediately disappeared. Zujovic had been the Minister of the Interior in the previous government when there was a massacre of workers attempting to occupy land to build homes, in Puerto Montt in 1969. [6] Victor Jara wrote a song about it. Politically, the assassination was a disaster. Any chance of the government reaching agreements with the PDC vanished. The right wing of the PDC took control and another group of its left wing split away.

The first big strike took place in October – not a workers' strike but the lorry owners who were paid well to stop work and disrupt the economy. The black market rate for dollars went down dramatically, as, it was believed, that they poured into the country from the US embassy. Heroic efforts were made to move goods by rail, using many volunteers – there is a famous photo of Victor Jara loading sacks of wheat. So basic foods were transported, but the strike did enormous economic damage.

After nearly 4 weeks Allende and the UP decided the only way to solve the problem was to call for help from the armed forces. So three military men became ministers in a government of national unity. A state of emergency was called, and the strike was ended. Ministers were changed regularly anyway because the opposition impeached them, using their majority in congress. Soon after this, in another cabinet reshuffle, the military ministers were dropped. In hindsight, the Communist Party saw this as a mistake. Many officers, saw it as their being used in an opportunist way, discarded when the immediate need for them was over.

Popular Unity divisions

One of the conditions necessary for a successful revolution is a united, conscious leadership. In Chile, the biggest and strongest parties were the communist and socialist parties. The communists were very loyal – any disagreements were not made public. A majority of the socialist party, however, had voted at their 1967 congress that armed struggle was necessary. Their leader, Carlos Altamirano, made alliance with the majority of the MAPU (which split) and the MIR which had a political-military strategy. Together they promoted the unrealistic idea of moving swiftly towards a socialist revolution, with the slogan 'Avanzar sin Transar' – forward with no compromise. Under the

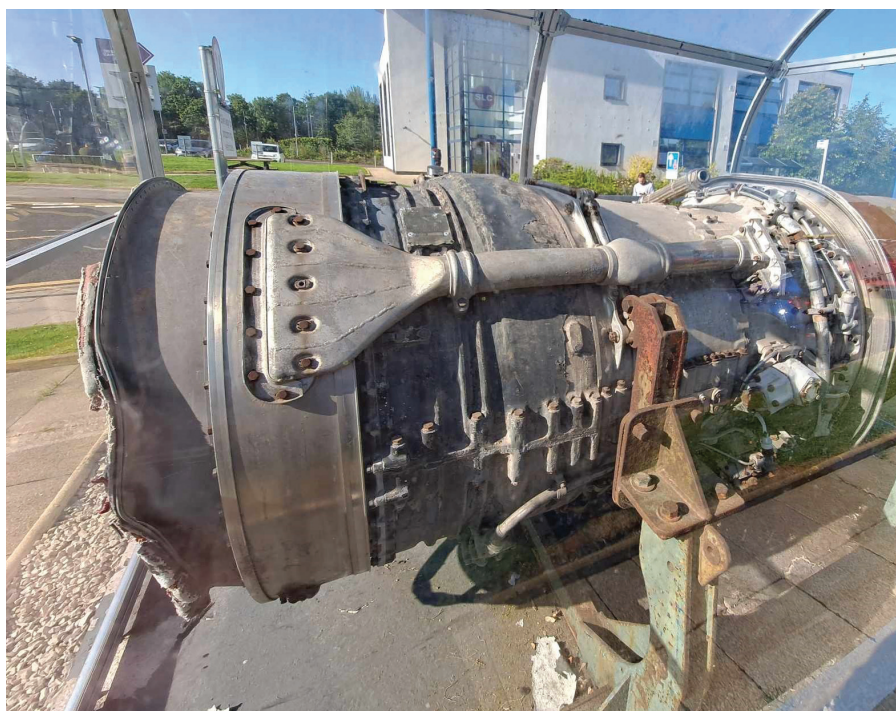


PHOTO BY FRIEDA PARK

Rolls Royce engine sent by the Chilean air force, along with others, for servicing after the coup to the Rolls Royce factory in East Kilbride, Scotland. Work on the engines was boycotted by the workers. The Hawker Hunter jets which attacked the Moneda Palace on the first day of the coup, were powered by Rolls Royce engines. This one now stands in the grounds of South Lanarkshire College in East Kilbride

influence of these ideas, businesses, even small ones, were taken over as well as farms outside the scope of the agrarian reform law.

In a situation where it was necessary to gather more political support, to show that the UP could improve people's lives, these ultra-left moves helped create the atmosphere of chaos that the right wing wanted. Communists used the slogan 'Win the battle of production', to overcome shortages. The ultra-left ignored or belittled this. As the fascist forces grew, communists said 'No to Civil War', while ultra-lefts said 'Win the Civil War' – which was politically mad as well as hopelessly unrealistic.

These divisions became worse as the political crisis deepened, and were very damaging. Allende ended up very angry at his own party leaders. At the same time, the fascist movement 'Patria y Libertad' – Homeland and Freedom – became more daring and stronger backed by CIA money.

The moves to suppress fascist subversion and sabotage were weaker than they should have been – the Communist Party later recognised it should have pressed harder for more repression. Although the main police force was not very reliable, the separate detective force was under direct government control.

Conditions worsen

The economic situation went from good to bad to worse. In 1972 the US sanctions began to bite and shortages of many goods increased. Prices were controlled, so many goods became available only on the black market, if at all. Toilet paper, toothpaste and cigarettes were scarce or non-existent in places, as well as meat and bread eventually. Inflation also started to become significant rising to over 300% in 1973. Wages were re-adjusted every 3 months but it was a spiral.

At the end of 1972 the Supply and Price Council (JAP) system was set

up. These were organised locally – a shopkeeper was supplied with basic foods and sold a set amount to each family, enough for the family members registered. A rationing system that worked, with a state distribution company. This was supervised by General Bachelet, our recent president, Michelle Bachelet's father. After the coup he was imprisoned and tortured for this, dying in prison as a result.

The coup

In March 1973 there were parliamentary elections. The opposition was a strong alliance of the PDC and the National Party, and they hoped for a two-thirds majority with which they could remove Allende. They failed. Popular Unity candidates got 44% of the vote. This, despite all the acute shortages, showed the strong level of political support among the people. However, as shortages became more acute and many middle class sectors turned to openly political strikes against the government.

The election result showed imperialism and the oligarchy that the only way to remove Allende was through a military coup. A premature attempt was made on 29th June but only one regiment took part and the military leaders soon squashed it. On the 22nd August, congress declared the government to be unconstitutional. Though illegal, this was used as the pretext for the coup. All the PDC congressmen voted for this, to avoid expulsion or because they then thought a coup was inevitable anyway. [7]

The balance of forces among the army generals moved against the government. Pressure was put on the constitutionalists and Carlos Prats, the Commander in Chief, and other generals felt forced to resign. As the economic and political situation got worse, it was decided that Allende would yield to the demand from the PDC to hold a plebiscite to decide the future of his govern-

ment. He was due to announce this on the 11th of September. Pinochet learnt this three days before, and the plans for the coup were hurriedly brought forward to prevent this chance to save the government.

The only other possibility came from the communist and socialist leaders in charge of relations with the military. They proposed bringing 10,000 young militants who had done military service into the army, to defend the government. [8] Prats said he would consider this as a last resort, but then he resigned. Allende relied on having a plebiscite and the Communist Party did not take the idea further. The plan would have caused a major political crisis but might well have averted the coup, by intimidating the coup leaders. There was a failure of specific intelligence, and all the calculations were that political moves could avert a coup.

Repression of the left started on the day of the coup itself. Allende killed himself after making one of the greatest speeches ever – he had promised not to leave the Moneda, the presidential palace, except in a coffin. Many of the defenders were killed the next day. The propaganda against Popular Unity had worked well among the military officers, and they launched a rabid campaign of revenge. Any conscripts who showed resistance were killed. All over the country, leading supporters of the government were rounded up and killed. Over the next weeks this became more selective and especially young committed leaders were picked up and eliminated. Many were ‘disappeared’ in the tactic used from then on to strike fear into all opponents. [9]

A different outcome?

So could Popular Unity have been successful? The proposal to bring thousands of young communists and socialists into the army could well have intimidated the ‘golpista’ (coup) officers. It was notable that

for weeks after the coup, the military patrols in Santiago all had distinctive armbands, changed every day, to identify them as loyal to the coup. There was obviously fear of groups loyal to the government. Short of that, had Allende been

Victor Jara image by Freddy Agurto Parra



allowed to announce a plebiscite that also might well have dampened the polarisation, changed the balance of forces and prevented the coup. A plebiscite then would probably have led to the end of the government, new elections and a new reactionary one. However, that would not have led to the massive wave of revenge killings and torture that followed the coup. The left would have lived, literally, to fight another day.

That was the situation in September 1973. Was it possible to avoid this economic and political crisis at this time? At some point, inevitably there would have been attempts to overthrow the government. This historical law has been proven with every attempt to replace capitalism with socialism. The communist strategy was to continue adding forces to those already won, so that those attempts would face a balance of forces disadvantageous to them.

This was difficult. The capitalists had the usual advantages: money,

lots of it from the USA especially but also support from West Germany and Britain; their superior education and experience of managing the state and society; close connections to higher technical and managerial sectors and the armed forces; force of habit - the strength of bourgeois ideas among peasants and even many workers. Faced with all these difficulties, the working class has just one great strength - its organisation. What Popular Unity achieved shows a good degree of organisation, but to win, it would have needed a strongly united leadership. With the majority of the Socialist Party leadership breaking that unity, I think the task was just too great. As the song created for Popular Unity says “The people, united, will never be defeated!”. The people disunited can be.

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alliance_for_Progress

[2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1970_Chilean_presidential_election

[3] See the Church committee report to the US Senate. The senator responsible, Frank Church, was later dropped and vilified.

[4] See the books by Peter Kornbluh, who keeps discovering de-classified documents relating to US secret operations. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Kornbluh

[5] Compared with British National Parks, it is 6 times the size of Exmoor, nearly twice that of Snowdonia or the Lake District, and over twice that of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.

[6] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massacre_of_Puerto_Montt

[7] <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/2023/08/22/a-50-anos-de-la-votacion-en-la-camara-que-consagro-la-inminencia-del-golpe-de-estado/>

[8] Very little known or discussed, this proposal is recounted in the memoirs of Carlos Toro, in charge of the communist military organisation: “La Guardia muere, pero no se rinde ... mierda”.

[9] Seen in the excellent film *Missing* Costa-Gavras, 1982

BRITAIN AND CHILE'S 9/11

by Pablo Navarrete

It was just before midday on 11th September 1973 when two British-built Hawker Hunter fighter jets flew over La Moneda, Chile's presidential palace, firing rockets into the building. Inside was socialist president Salvador Allende and scores of his aides and supporters. A coup against Allende, in power since November 1970, was now fully in motion. By the end of the day Allende was dead and a 17 year-long brutal military dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet followed that butchered Chile's democracy and radically transformed the country.

Exposing Britain's role

The role of the US government in sabotaging Allende's presidency and supporting the coup and Pinochet junta is now well documented. Less known, however, is the role played by the British government. As we mark the 50th anniversary of the Chilean 9/11, a documentary I'm working on with investigative journalist John McEvoy seeks to expose the UK's role in the destruction of Chile's democracy and its support for the coup regime. We also explore the relationship between Thatcher and Pinochet and how Tony Blair's New Labour helped the Chilean dictator evade justice for war crimes.

In June we travelled to Chile to film interviews for the documentary. We spoke to leading Chilean journalists, the relatives of British nationals who were targeted by the Pinochet regime, torture survivors, and prominent Chilean officials. We also spoke to Pablo S epulveda Allende, Salvador Allende's grand-



PHOTO BY ALBODARA FILMS

John McEvoy interviews Pablo S epulveda Allende, grandson of Salvador Allende (left)

son. [1] [2] Pablo was born to Allende's oldest daughter, Carmen Paz, in Mexico in 1976. His family were exiled there having fled Chile after the coup. He has now returned to live in Chile and is a qualified doctor working in mental health. In April 2020, a few months after the eruption of mass anti-government protests in Chile in October 2019, Pablo was detained [3] while providing medical treatment to those on the streets rallying against neoliberalism and police brutality in Chile – both remnants of the Pinochet dictatorship.

When we met in June, the hard-right government of Sebastian Pi era had given way to the ostensibly left-wing government of Gabriel Boric, in power since March 2022. I spoke to Pablo about the past and present of Chilean politics, including his grandfather's government and legacy, for an upcoming film of mine, while John's interview with him for our documentary focused on the UK's machinations in Chile and what his

investigations had uncovered. John's interview began with him reading excerpts to Pablo from declassified British government files, all of which have only recently been released into the UK National Archives. Many are still heavily redacted. The files detail how it wasn't just the US government that was working to prevent Allende from reaching the presidency. In fact, Britain's Cold War propaganda unit, the Information Research Department (IRD), had been working to prevent Allende from coming to power since at least 1962. As Allende's electoral prospects improved during the late 1960s, Britain's covert propaganda operations in Chile intensified. "We are concentrating on covert operations which we think could influence the result of the next elections", noted Pat Dyer, the IRD field officer in Santiago, in 1968. British efforts ultimately failed as Allende won the 1970 election – a victory secured at the fourth attempt to become president since 1952.

The UK government continued its destabilisation of Allende's 'Popular Unity' (UP) government, the left-wing coalition of parties which brought Allende to power, as soon it was elected. For example, as a 2020 article by John in the independent media outlet *Declassified UK* (DCUK) [4] outlines, in October 1970, one month after Allende's election, UK government officials in Chile covertly facilitated a CIA-funded news agency, *Forum World Features* (FWF). [5] British Foreign Secretary Alec Douglas-Home instructed the embassy in Santiago to "respond to any approach" from FWF after its chief, Brian Crozier, requested assistance for a series of "behind the scenes" articles on Allende's programme.

John's piece argues that FWF played a significant role in the propaganda war against Allende. Crozier later recalled that FWF journalist Robert Moss' work in and on Chile "played its part in the necessary destabilisation of the Allende regime". In December 1973, three months after Allende was overthrown, Moss published *Chile's Marxist Experiment* – a CIA-commissioned book which

have much information about the actions of the British government against Allende in Chile", he says. "But, as you know, given the role of the US, it's not surprising. From an Anglo-Saxon point of view, the US and Britain act as one in many respects". Pablo relates this effort to wider colonial practices of seeking to prevent the economic development of smaller countries: "The colonialist countries in general have collaborated, let's say, so that the decolonised countries can't become independent, so that they don't have any real economic or political independence".

End the secrecy

John's investigations have exposed how British covert action in Chile during this period was often undertaken in collaboration with the US, with advice and intelligence being shared with the US embassy in Santiago.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of Chile's coup, the US government has come under pressure to fully declassify its records on the 1973 coup. [6] The British government

As we mark the 50th anniversary of Chile's coup, the US government has come under pressure to fully declassify its records on the 1973 coup. The British government should also come under similar pressure to do the same.

denied Washington's role in the coup and blamed Allende instead. The Pinochet regime purchased 10,000 copies of Crozier's book "to be given away as part of a propaganda package".

This was the first time that Pablo had heard about the UK government's hidden hand in sabotaging his grandfather's political project, but he was not surprised. "I didn't

should also come under similar pressure to do the same. With so much secrecy surrounding its plotting against Allende, we hope our documentary shines a light on how the UK government bears a level of responsibility for Pinochet's atrocities, while its actions also helped kill the hopes of millions of Chileans who supported Allende in his project to build a more humane, socialist Chile.

[1] declassifieduk.org 11/9/23

[2] <https://dialogosdelsur.operamundi.uol.com.br/america-latina/61132/nieto-de-allende-asegura-que-chile-desperto-del-tarugo-neoliberal-y-quienes-lo-sostienen>

[3] Chilean Doctor Pablo Sepúlveda Allende (Grandson of Salvador Allende) Detained While Treating Protesters Wounded in Santiago – Orinoco Tribune – News and opinion pieces about Venezuela and beyond

[4] Exclusive: Secret cables reveal Britain interfered with elections in Chile (declassifieduk.org)

[5] Information Research Department: *Forum World Features*; special coverage of the situation... | The National Archives

[6] CHILE'S COUP at 50 Kissinger Briefed Nixon on Failed 1970 CIA Plot to Block Allende Presidency | National Security Archive (www.gwu.edu)



Pablo Navarrete is an independent journalist and documentary filmmaker focusing on Latin America. He is a founding editor of Alborada and the director of Alborada Films. www.alborada.net/pablonavarrete

For more information about how to support the production of the forthcoming documentary 'Britain and Chile's 9/11' and online screenings of the interview with Pablo Sepulveda Allende about the UK government's role in Chile visit: www.alboradafilms.net/films/originals

For more information about political developments in Latin America visit: www.alborada.net

To read John McEvoy's and others' latest investigations on the UK government's role in Chile, visit: [www.declassifieduk.org/tag/chile/](https://declassifieduk.org/tag/chile/)

UH-60As over Port Salines airport Grenada 1983

Grenada

Revolution and invasion 40 years on

by Paul Sutton

On 25th October 1983 the USA invaded the tiny Caribbean island of Grenada without warning. It did so in a military operation that was kept so secret that Mrs Thatcher, then British prime minister, was only informed by Ronald Reagan, then US president, that they were doing so less than 12 hours before the first US forces landed, even though Grenada was a former British colony and the Queen was still its head of state. It led to strained relations for a few days between London and Washington DC and threw into doubt whether the US would consult on, or give any warning of, the use of cruise missiles due to be stationed at Greenham Common in the UK in a matter of weeks.

Building socialism

It also brought to an end the attempt by the New Jewel Movement (NJM) to build socialism in Grenada. It had taken power four and a half years earlier in a virtually bloodless coup/insurrection against the increasingly dictatorial and brutal government of Eric Gairy, the prime minister. He was out of Grenada at the time addressing the United Nations, urging them to establish a body to investigate

‘unidentified flying objects’ (UFOs). While away he had ordered the arrest and murder by his secret police of the leading members of the NJM. Warned of this the NJM seized power to popular acclaim, summed up in the slogan chanted throughout Grenada: ‘Freedom come. Gairy go. Gairy gone with U.F.O.’

The task facing the NJM was formidable. Grenada was an island of 133 sq. miles with a population of about 90,000. It had been forced into independence in 1974 against the will of the majority of the people, including the NJM which emerged as the main opposition to Gairy. The NJM was subject to mounting intimidation and violence and in 1975 took the decision that to survive it would need to transform itself into a Marxist-Leninist party. On taking power it inherited a primarily agricultural economy characterised by decades of neglect and dependent on just a few agricultural exports, notably nutmeg and spices, for most of its foreign exchange. Given its socialist ideology, the NJM aimed to radically transform the country by a programme of non-capitalist development. This envisaged a state-led model of economic development of increasing national ownership, alongside a private sector moving toward co-operative enterprises, and building infrastructure,

notably through the construction of a new international airport to encourage tourism.

Alongside this were programmes to reduce high levels of unemployment, increase educational participation, and develop worker engagement through trade unions and involvement in mass organisations for women and youth among others. These social programmes encouraged support for the NJM and commitment to the Revolution. The economy moved from stagnation under Gairy to modest growth and Grenada once again was able to access international development loans which had been denied Gairy, given the scale of corruption in the country. At the end of 1981, when I visited Grenada, there were visible signs of economic progress and social improvement everywhere as well as widespread support for the policies of the NJM.

In developing their programmes Grenada had turned to Cuba and then the Soviet Union for aid. Cuba quickly supplied weapons and training to create a People’s Revolutionary Army (PRA) and then materials and construction workers to begin the building of the airport. It also offered hundreds of scholarships in Cuba for higher education and provided advice and encourage-

ment for Grenada to take a leading role in the Non-Aligned Movement. The Soviet Union, after a cautious start, also began to provide finance and training as well as some military assistance.

US hostility

Such links alarmed the US government which viewed the Caribbean as its 'backyard'. Within a month of the NJM taking power it had warned them not to develop links with Cuba, a warning quickly condemned and then rejected by Maurice Bishop, the leader of the NJM, in a much-publicised speech which proclaimed 'We are in nobody's backyard'. Relations between the US and Grenada accordingly deteriorated and, with the election of Reagan in November 1980, became strident. Soon after he took office Reagan implemented a policy of open hostility to Grenada exemplified by staging large-scale military exercises (involving 120,000 troops, 250 warships, and 1,000 aircraft) off Puerto Rico in August 1981, codenamed 'Operation Amber', the objective of which was to capture a mountainous island and install a government friendly to the USA. By March 1983 Reagan was claiming: "the so-called experts who argued that we shouldn't worry about Castroite control over the island of Grenada haven't taken a good look at the map lately...It isn't nutmeg that is at stake in the Caribbean and Central America: it is the United States' national security" [1]

Military threats were further amplified by US policies seeking to isolate Grenada in the region and deny it loans by international agencies. The squeeze this put upon programmes of economic and social transformation increased considerably and in 1982 the Revolution began running into difficulties. The NJM sought to address this in a series of Central Committee meetings that culminated in a Special General Meeting of all members in September to consider the way forward. Among



Cuban prisoner captured by the US during invasion being repatriated

PHOTO BY DPLA

the considerations was whether it would become a mass political party or remain small and tightly focused (it then had less than 100 full members, 100 candidate members and 200 applicant members). It opted for the latter and in a document entitled 'Line of March' put even more responsibilities on the NJM to lead the Revolution. In retrospect, and many years later, Bernard Coard, the most important person in the NJM after Maurice Bishop, wrote: "in many ways, the future course of the Revolution was set at that Special General Meeting". [2]. Things got worse, not better and a year later the Revolution was in acute crisis and about to implode.

To attempt to moderate US pressures Bishop went to Washington DC in June 1983 hoping to meet with senior US officials and even possibly Reagan. He was ignored and, toward the end, a hastily convened brief meeting with the US National Security Adviser and Deputy Secretary of State resolved nothing. Returning empty-handed Bishop spoke to an emergency meeting of the NJM. It now saw the threat of US invasion as 'not imminent but inevitable'. In the meantime, the NJM was acutely aware that its membership was becoming exhausted through overwork and

support for the Revolution was fast draining away as economic and social programmes were cut back and slowly ground to a halt.

Conflict in NJM

More meetings were held over three days in September. It was eventually decided to move to Joint Leadership of the NJM with Maurice Bishop remaining as the leader in charge of political links with 'the masses' and international relations while Coard was to return to the Central Committee (he had resigned a year earlier) and direct and develop work within the NJM. Immediately after, Bishop left for a visit to Eastern Europe and Cuba and when he returned a week later he rejected Joint Leadership, precipitating a further crisis. More meetings in the next weeks resolved nothing and rumours began to circulate widely that Coard was planning to murder Bishop and take command. Relations between Coard and Bishop broke down and, in response to a belief that Bishop was the source of the rumours, the Central Committee put him under 'house arrest' on 13th October. This proved the final straw. Spontaneous demonstrations broke out all over Grenada with the slogan 'No Bishop, No Revo'. On October 19th a mass demonstra-

tion released him and he and some other leading members of the NJM, along with some of the crowd, went to Fort Rupert the head-quarters of the PRA in the capital St George's where they disarmed the soldiers, without a fight and distributed their weapons among those present.

What happened then is contested but essentially other elements of the PRA intervened to recapture the fort. Shots were fired and members of the crowd and several PRA were killed. Bishop and three other leading members of the NJM were put against a wall and shot. In all, 20 died. The PRA took over and declared martial law.

Invasion

The tumultuous events of these weeks had not gone unnoticed by Grenada's neighbours in the Commonwealth Caribbean, all of whom had been former British colonies. In the early days they had welcomed the NJM and many remained broadly supportive of the economic and social aims of the Revolution, but when it refused to hold elections to legitimate its coup/insurrection support began to weaken among some countries, such as Jamaica and Barbados, who had elected right-wing governments. Some other smaller islands of the Eastern Caribbean such as Antigua, Dominica and St Lucia also began to worry about their security as the NJM adopted an increasingly socialist agenda and built up the PRA. The confusion and chaos in Grenada in September/early October alarmed them and with the killing of Bishop the prime minister of Barbados, Tom Adams, sensed an opportunity. On 19th October, citing the authority of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), he asked the US to participate in a multinational military force to intervene.

By then the chaos in Grenada had also alerted the US. They were immediately concerned because they had some 1,000 nationals liv-

ing in Grenada, three-quarters of whom were students studying medicine at a private university. A special group to consider their evacuation began meeting in Washington DC from October 13th citing fears that the students might be taken hostage (as had happened in Tehran in the late 1970s). Planning continued and intensified as the situation in Grenada deteriorated, eventually taking on the form of a possible invasion. On 20th October the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided this was militarily feasible and on 23rd October Reagan gave the go-ahead to launch the invasion.

The US attacked with overwhelming force and met with some resistance by the PRA and the Cubans working on the airport. In all, 16 Grenadians, 19 US and 24 Cubans were killed. No students were harmed and while some 400 plus subsequently asked to be evacuated the Vice-Chancellor of their university stated that none of them were ever in any danger. Coard and leading members of the PRA and NJM were arrested and 17 of them, including Coard, were put on trial in Grenada and sentenced to death, without any firm evidence, for ordering Bishop's murder. This was later commuted to life imprisonment and following a series of appeals claiming an irregular and prejudiced trial they were all finally released by 2009.

Achievements and mistakes

Soon after the events I wrote a book on Grenada, along with two other colleagues [3]. Many more books and articles have followed since, examining both the Revolution and the Invasion. In respect of the former the dominant view is that while the Revolution delivered many economic and social benefits it failed politically by adopting a too rigid and inflexible attitude to problems of political leadership of both the NJM and the Grenadian people. As Coard himself chronicles in his

recent books on Grenada, mistake after mistake was made until in the end the Revolution collapsed in political chaos.

In respect of the latter, detailed work by Gary Williams [4] shows that the chaos in Grenada was too good an opportunity for the Reagan Administration to miss, providing the pretext to intervene, 'legitimated' in US eyes but not in international law by the decision of the OECS to ask it to do so. The United Nations General Assembly condemned the invasion by 108 votes to 9. However, as far as the US was concerned it allowed them to 'roll-back' Cuban influence in the Caribbean and assert its power in the region which it had claimed was of special interest to it as far back as 1823.

In 1984 Ronald Reagan visited Grenada and in 1998 Fidel Castro. I re-visited Grenada in 2022. The most visible signs of the Revolution were the completed Maurice Bishop international Airport and the three separate memorials to the Cubans, Grenadians and US soldiers who died in the invasion. The Revolution and Invasion are briefly covered in school text books but otherwise there is no mention of them other than the annual commemoration church service on October 25th. Grenada looks and feels very much like its neighbouring Eastern Caribbean islands.

[1] US Government, Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents, 14 March 1983

[2] Bernard Coard, *The Grenada Revolution: What Really Happened?* (McDermott Publishing: Jamaica and Grenada), 2017 p.72

[3] Anthony Payne, Paul Sutton and Tony Thorndike, *Grenada: Revolution and Invasion* (Croom Helm: London, 1984)

[4] Gary Williams, *US-Grenada Relations: Revolution and Intervention in the Backyard* (New York and London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

BAE SYSTEMS

vital to British state interests

by John Moore

Like the rest of the military-industrial complex, BAE Systems is doing well out of the Ukraine war. In 2022 it made profits of £2.5 billion and racked up new orders worth £37 billion. This is on top of existing orders worth £20 billion. In his foreword to the company's 2022 annual report, CEO Charles Woodburn celebrated a 12.5% rise in profits, while noting the "tragic" fact that a war had brought them about. [1]

Ukraine bonanza

Ukraine is providing an effective showcase for BAE weapons, which make up the bulk of British arms sent to Ukraine, and it is this successful battle-testing that is giving a huge boost to sales, according to one BAE executive. [2] Products include the Challenger 2 tank and the long-standing M777 howitzer, saved from being phased out by its strong performance on the frontlines. One BAE factory, at Radway Green, South Cheshire, alone can produce 1 million items of munitions (bullets, shells, bombs) a day and BAE is having to take on more skilled workers both in Cheshire and at other BAE sites in Tyne and Wear and South Wales to fulfil the latest MoD order worth £280 million.

BAE is doing so well it's opening an office in Ukraine to prepare for building a new arms factory there, in competition with its German rival Rheinmetall, which is similarly expanding to produce Leopard tanks in Ukraine. Both firms will benefit from the much cheaper Ukrainian labour – wages there are a tenth of those in Germany and the UK.



PHOTO BY TERESA PICKIN

Challenger 2 tanks

Across Europe, arms companies such as BAE, Rheinmetall and France's Thales are confident of buoyant results over the next few years. No wonder, when the McKinsey consultancy estimates European military spending will reach £400 billion by 2026, a 53% increase on 2022 levels. Such a huge escalation in arms budgets is reminiscent of the periods before World Wars 1 and 2.

State subsidises BAE profits

BAE's strategic importance in underpinning British power gives it immense financial privileges. A recent report by the progressive Common Wealth thinktank reveals that BAE pays only 14.35% of its own Research & Development (R&D) costs. The rest comes out of government subsidies. "Arms companies are officially private companies, but they are supported by the state in a way no other sector is," says Sussex University professor Anna Stavrianakis. As Julian Lewis, the

chairman of the Commons Defence Select Committee, says BAE is "not a normal business". [3] The special status of BAE was pointed out by the late Robin Cook MP (Labour foreign secretary, 1997-2001) who recalled: "I came to learn that the chairman of BAE appeared to have the key to the garden door to No 10."

BAE paid out nearly £1 billion in dividends in 2022, a large chunk of it to BlackRock and Capital Group, the two biggest asset management firms in the world, which together control 25% of BAE. BAE provides these investors with consistently high returns guaranteed by the British government. As the welfare state is dismantled in Britain, 'corporate welfare' is doing well.

The revolving door

Given the symbiotic relationship between BAE and the British state, a well-oiled revolving door between the two is necessary. Sir Sherard

Cowper-Coles, former UK ambassador to Saudi Arabia, was appointed onto BAE's board as its international business director a few years after he had played a key role in Tony Blair's dropping of the Serious Fraud Office's investigation into the corrupt BAE - Saudi al-Yamamah arms deal in 2006. Similarly, former Air Chief Marshal Sir Glenn Torpy was given a role as senior adviser to BAE in 2009 after his retirement from the RAF. Sir Philip May, the husband of former prime minister Theresa May, has long been a senior executive of Capital Group, a major shareholder in BAE. Lord Glendonbrooke, Lord Sassoon, Lord Lupton, Lord Gadhia and Viscount Eccles, among other peers, each own at least £50,000 worth of shares in BAE. It's hard to disentangle BAE from the British state and political machine.

Universities and thinktanks

Alongside direct political influence, BAE also buys ideological sway, as do other UK arms manufacturers such as Rolls Royce, QinetiQ and Babcock. Major British thinktanks that specialise in military analysis and international affairs, and cited as authoritative independent sources in the news media, are funded by BAE. For example, BAE is the Royal United Services Institute's second biggest donor; while the 'left' New Statesman is paid by BAE for running advertorials on the journal's website and is sponsored by BAE for its annual Politics Live event, which debates "national security strategy".

BAE is also infecting the next generation of engineers and scientists, having penetrated the higher education sector to the tune of over £1 billion. University College London and the universities of, Cambridge, Glasgow, Birmingham, Southampton and Cranfield (the RAF officer training school now a university) are all part of BAE's 2017 "strategic university partnership programme". A recent piece of research reveals that only 11 universities, out of all the

universities contacted by the Byline Times Intelligence Team, confirmed that they had received no funding from British arms companies (18/8/21).

Special relationship with the US

The central role BAE plays in shaping Britain's global alignment is especially clear in terms of Britain's relations with the USA. Among foreign companies, BAE enjoys an exclusive place within the US defence sector. BAE's American subsidiary, BAE Systems Inc., is the sixth biggest supplier to the US defense department. BAE sells more to the US state than to the British state – 43% of its sales went to the US in 2019.

While the Pentagon prohibits foreign businesses from access to US military technology, it makes an exception for BAE under the US's Special Security Arrangements. BAE has also been allowed to merge with US arms makers. In 2000, it acquired Lockheed's aerospace electronics division for £1.1 billion. Moreover, BAE can bid for US contracts directly from the Pentagon as if it were a US firm. Its unique advantage among foreign companies has helped give BAE a huge lead over its European rivals in terms of global sales, which are more than double those of its nearest European rival, Italy's Leonardo. BAE is the second biggest foreign donor to US political candidates and

clearly its donations to both Democrats and Republicans have done it no harm.

Nevertheless, the US/UK Special Relationship is an unequal one. While BAE gives the British military establishment unparalleled proximity to top level US decision-makers, a firewall still prevents British personnel from gaining access to the most sensitive technological secrets according to former BAE CEO Mike Turner. (Speech to the Washington Economic Club, 10/5/06) More crucially, Britain's nuclear weapons are entirely dependent on the US. While Britain's nuclear submarines are built in Barrow-in-Furness by BAE's 9,000 local workers, they are designed in the US and regularly return to the US naval base at King's Bay, Georgia for re-arming and repairs. Trident's technology is largely American – Britain's four submarines are carbon copies of the US's Ohio-class Trident submarines. Britain merely leases its nuclear missiles from the US, and all weapons testing is carried out at Cape Canaveral, Florida. "Trident cuts to the heart of the US-UK Special Relationship, and its contrasting significance for London and Washington", says commentator Jake Wallis-Simons. [4]

It's no coincidence that Gina Haspel, the first woman to lead the CIA and overseer of an alleged torture at a 'black site' in Thailand, sits on the BAE board.



PHOTO BY MOD

Workers in the defence industry

Given the strategic importance of BAE and the defence industry to the British establishment, organised workers are in a potentially strong position. Yet there is little sign of militancy in the industry, let alone calls for diversification into civilian production. In fact, recent decisions and statements from a number of unions point in the other direction, in support of higher arms spending. Perhaps this should be unsurprising, given that BAE is Britain's biggest manufacturing company and 'supports' 132,000 UK jobs, many of them highly skilled. Unite the union estimates that BAE's Military Air and Information division alone employs 13,000 skilled workers.

While Unite is officially sympathetic to diversification, it supported a GMB-initiated motion at the TUC in October 2022 calling for an increased defence budget – reversing existing TUC policy. Unite assistant general secretary Steve Turner argued that, "The defence of the nation must be linked with the defence of our national economy and the retention of the UK's ability and freedom to operate independently, whether on land, at sea, in

the air or online." Unite later also welcomed the government's decision to build the next generation of nuclear submarines at BAE's Barrow shipyard, using nuclear engines made by Rolls Royce in Derby. The GMB likewise welcomed Labour's clear promise to back nuclear weapons and the arms industry.

By contrast, the RMT opposed the GMB-Unite composite at the TUC, arguing that a major war would not "support jobs in Barrow or Derby or Bristol" but instead could "destroy the world. [5] With no sign of British workers refusing to handle arms to Ukraine, as dockworkers in Genoa and railworkers in Thessaloniki have done, the (close-run) TUC vote points up the difficulty of promoting more progressive policy in the UK.

Drive to war

Meanwhile, BAE is actively pushing for escalating war. After all, its profits depend on it – 98% of its production is weapons-related. Hence, the \$3,630,000 spent on lobbying in 2021, designed to promote BAE's "solutions for national defence and security requirements", as its own factsheet admits – "solutions" that certainly don't include peace. BAE's lobbying has added to US pressure

on the UK government to make the biggest increase in military spending since the Korean War, amounting to £24 billion in 2021. In 2022, Tory defence secretary Ben Wallace announced further increases – rising to £100 billion a year by 2030, which will double the current arms budget. This puts Britain's military expenditure as the fourth highest in the world – above Russia and France, with only the USA, China and India spending more.

Meanwhile, the AUKUS alliance with Australia and the US is fundamentally premised on BAE's production of nuclear submarines. So BAE's drive for profits cannot be separated from government foreign policy. During the Yemen war, David Cameron boasted of his success in selling fighter planes to Saudi Arabia on behalf of BAE. BAE's interests help define the 'national interest'.

[1] i newspaper 23/2/23

[2] Wall Street Journal, 9/10/22

[3] Eastern Daily Press, 10/10/17

[4] Politico, 30/4/15

[5] Morning Star, 22/1/23

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NATO or non-alignment?

by Gary Lefley

On the 4th April this year Finland joined NATO, becoming its 31st member state, with Sweden also set to join soon. With Finland's accession, NATO doubled the length of its border with Russia. Finland will now welcome US and NATO military bases onto its soil, including the capacity to station US nuclear missiles within 5 minutes striking distance of St Petersburg and 7 minutes from Moscow.

In military language, this will provide the US with nuclear primacy, that is, a nuclear first-strike capability. Investigative historian Eric Zuesse explains that US nuclear missiles, "will be within just a 7-minute blitz striking distance away from instantaneously annihilating Russia's central command: so fast that for Russia to be able to recognize the missile had indeed been launched, and then to unleash Russia's [nuclear arsenal] in response, would be impossible. Until today, no NATO member nation was even nearly so close to the Kremlin. Finland's joining it gives to America's central command the 'Nuclear Primacy' - the ability to 'win' a nuclear war against Russia, not merely to prevent one..." [1] Zuesse goes on to say, "The Nuclear Primacy nuclear-war-meta-strategy includes acceptance that at least a few million Americans would die in a US-Russia war even under the best of circumstances but considers that to be well worth America's then emerging after WW III as the unchallengeable master of the entire planet."

The rhetoric that Finland joining NATO somehow makes the world - or even Finland - safer, is cold-war madness.



PHOTO BY PRESS AND INFORMATION OFFICE AZERBAIJAN

The most recent summit of the Non Aligned Movement was held in Baku, Azerbaijan

NATO advances

In February 1990, George H. W. Bush's secretary of state, James Baker, gave his Soviet counterpart, Eduard Shevardnadze, "iron-clad guarantees that NATO's jurisdiction or forces would not move eastward". On the same day in Moscow, he famously told the Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev that the alliance would not move "one inch to the east". [2] Since then, 15 nation states east of Berlin have joined NATO, 4 of which directly border on Russia: Norway, Estonia, Latvia and now Finland. Ukraine, which shares a 1,426 mile border with Russia, if not the final piece in the jigsaw (that would be Belarus and Georgia) would be the jewel in NATO's offensive crown.

NATO's eastward expansion has nothing to do with defence. Defence against what? Russia's military budget - \$61.7bn - is minuscule compared with that of the USA: \$778bn. It is comparable to that of

Britain: \$59.2bn, a budget Britain's government is committed to doubling over the next 7 years. And it is marginally less than each of France: \$52.7bn; Germany: \$52.8bn; and Japan: \$49.1bn, 3 nations that have also recently committed to massive militarisation. [3] In addition to military expenditure, overseas military bases are a useful indices of offensive capability and intent. Russia has around 35. Britain has 145. The U.S. has approximately 750! (China has 5).

NATO - war not defence

When 12 states formed NATO in 1949 the excuse was to 'defend western values and way of life from Soviet socialism.' Bearing in mind that the Soviet Union had just lost 28 million citizens in defeating Nazi Germany and liberating two thirds of Europe, in a war that the US had kept out of for 5 years; and a war in which Britain had for 4 years opted to squabble with Germany in north Africa over colonies rather than

open a western front against the might of the Wehrmacht; we may want to question just what those 'western values' amounted to, other than naked imperial interest.

Decades later the Cold War narrative persisted that NATO was formed to defend the west from the Warsaw Pact. In fact, the Warsaw Pact was not formed until 1955, after 6 years of NATO warmongering. Predictably, when the Warsaw Pact was wound up in 1991, NATO was not dissolved. On the contrary, it doubled its membership. Over 30 years later it continues in its mission to martial the rest of the world in accordance with the interests of exported western capital while subordinating its members to US hegemony.

Since its inception in 1949 NATO countries, primarily the US, have been involved in multiple wars of invasion and conquest, under the guise of 'peacekeeping' and 'conflict resolution'. According to one study, the US engaged in 64 covert and 6 overt attempts at regime change during the Cold War. [4] Since the defeat of the Soviet Union in 1990, the 'War on Terror' (in truth, an imperial war OF terror) has inflicted devastation with millions of fatalities, creating 30 million displaced persons of whom the British government is seeking to wash its hands. Britain and NATO have either participated in these wars, explicitly backed the US, or covertly supported it, including in Yugoslavia, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan and Syria.

US control

Ukraine is the latest case of US military interference. NATO powers and western media have worked overtime to re-write history and present the Ukraine war as a Russian provocation. The reality is that the US organised the coup in 2014 that overthrew the elected government and facilitated Kiev's 8-year war on the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. Sceptics

should read the 2019 Rand Report, "Overextending and Unbalancing Russia" [5] which spells out the US covert plans to drag Russia into a war in Ukraine.

After the investigative report by Seymour Hersch there is little doubt that the US blew up the Nord Stream pipeline that brought Russian gas to Germany. [6] This was an act of state terrorism against Russia, but it was equally a devastating attack on Germany. The outcome is that the German people will have to pay 40% more for their gas, which will now be bought from

Since its inception in 1949 NATO countries, primarily the US, have been involved in multiple wars of invasion and conquest, under the guise of 'peacekeeping' and 'conflict resolution'.

US Liquefied Natural Gas monopolies. It was a violent lesson in US power and coercion: NATO members will not be allowed to build international economic relations which conflict with the interests of US monopoly capital. NATO is a military alliance for imperial collaboration in exploiting, threatening and, where required, brutalising states that wish to assert their independence. But it is also a tool of US hegemony for asserting control over its members. Rather than being an alliance for 'mutual security', NATO is a surreptitious threat to the independence of all its members - except the US of course.

NATO members join the alliance, partly at least, to share in the imperial booty. But they are also banking on the alliance to uphold the interests of domestic capitalism against the exigencies of an enduring economic crash and social unrest. In that respect NATO

is the military expression of the IMF and World Bank. Given no other choice, the ruling elites of other major capitalist states would rather be beholden to US capital and NATO than to the revolutionary potential of their own working class.

De-dollarisation

The rejection of the dollar as the compulsory currency for international trade is indicative of the increasing strains on the US world order, and the beginnings of new opportunities for non-alignment. The response of the US establish-

ment to states abandoning the dollar is illuminating - and alarming. US Senator Marco Rubio recently let the cat out of the bag in an astonishing outburst, "Just today, Brazil, the largest country in the Western Hemisphere, cut a trade deal with China. They're going to, from now on, do trade in their own currencies, get right around the dollar. They're creating a secondary economy in the world totally independent of the United States. We won't have to talk about sanctions in five years, because there'll be so many countries transacting in currencies other than the dollar that we won't have the ability to sanction them."

Rubio's view was endorsed by Fareed Zakaria writing in *The Washington Post*, "The dollar is America's superpower. It gives Washington unrivalled economic and political muscle. The United States can slap sanctions on coun-

tries unilaterally, freezing them out of large parts of the world economy. And when Washington spends freely, it can be certain that its debt will be bought up by the rest of the world.” Pentagon insider Elbridge Colby endorsed the view that the US might, “not be able to finance a war with China if the US dollar loses its status as the world’s reserve currency.” [7]

States with significant economic leverage, such as India, China, Brazil, Russia and Saudi Arabia, are negotiating deals based on their own currencies. These developments are not devoid of problematic repercussions. They are the wedge of a new multipolar world order that in the short term is destabilising and carries the threat of new US-led conflicts. But they also carry the hope of a domino effect in world trade that opens up important opportunities for poorer, non-aligned states to trade more freely, without the destructive threat of sanctions and the imposition of debt that can never be paid off.

Non-aligned movement

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) had its origins in the Bandung Conference of April 1945 in Indonesia, inspired by three world leaders: Nehru of India, Tito of Yugoslavia and Nasser of Egypt. It was formally launched in 1961. It draws together 120 nations representing nearly two-thirds of the United Nations’ members and 55% of the world population. It is independent of military blocs - today that effectively means, not in NATO.

NAM has based its work on the 10 Bandung principles, including:

- Respect for the sovereignty, equality and territorial integrity of all states
- Rejection of any unconstitutional change of government, as well as external attempts to change the regime of government

■ The preservation of the inalienable right that each state is free, without interference from outside, to determine its political, social, economic and cultural system; rejection of aggression and direct or indirect use of force;

■ Rejection of any unilateral economic, political or military measures.

For the first 30 years of its existence the NAM played a crucial role in decolonisation and the formation of new independent states. In the post-1990 US unipolar world order the NAM has aspired to occupy a global political niche that seeks to oppose the West’s unilateral actions on the world stage.

NATO does not defend Britain. It ties us to the coattails of US foreign policy and embroils us in military threats to the independence and very existence of other states. In so doing, it makes the UK a prime target for retaliation. And so long as Britain retains its nuclear arsenal and insists on flexing its imperial muscle - like sending an attack fleet to the South China Sea as it did last year - our NATO membership represents a self-inflicted existential threat.

The case for Britain withdrawing from NATO and joining the Non-Aligned Movement grows stronger as the US unipolar world order begins to crack, and the US response is increasingly to wage war, and to whip its ‘allies’ into line. A non-aligned Britain would be free to participate in the international economic and trade alliances that are emerging, such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and to forge long term peaceful, cooperative relationships independently of the dollar. The outcome will be a more prosperous Britain, and a safer world.

[1] *America’s Secret Planned Conquest of Russia*, Eric Zuesse 2016

[2] How Gorbachev Was Misled Over Assurances Against NATO Expansion, *NATO Watch* 2/1/2018

[3] World Military Spending Rises to Almost \$2 Trillion In 2020, *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute* 26/4/21

[4] The Strategic Logic of Covert Regime Change: US-Backed Regime Change Campaigns during the Cold War. *Security Studies* 29: 92–127, Lindsey O’Rourke 29/11/2019

[5] Overextending and Unbalancing Russia - Assessing the impact of cost imposing options, *Rand Corporation* 2019

[6] How America Took Out the Nord Stream Pipeline, Seymour Hersch. 8/2/23

[7] Marco Rubio Accidentally Makes a Great Argument Against US Dollar Hegemony, Caitlin Johnstone 3/4/23

From The Socialist Correspondent 10 years ago

“Tackling climate change will require the mobilisation of people, technology and capital. Since most technology and capital is in private hands this will not just be difficult, it may prove impossible in the absence of public ownership of economic assets.

...Global warming is a clear and present danger and socialist solutions are fundamental to stem the risk of a food catastrophe.”

Issue 19 Winter 2013

**The hungry planet
- climate crisis**

Greg Kaser

Pat Turnbull reviews world views and events



PHOTO BY DILMA ROUSSEFF

Dilma Rousseff President of the BRICS New Development Bank

Ukraine prospects for peace?

In the June issue of German journal *RotFuchs*, retired Colonel Gerhard Giese (National People's Army, German Democratic Republic) writes about the conflict in Ukraine. He sees it as "a military conflict, chiefly on the territory of Ukraine, initiated by the West, which, as a result of the military confrontation between Ukraine, militarily equipped by the West, and Russia, has developed from a special operation by the Russian Federation (RF) with the goal of demilitarisation and denazification of Ukraine into a proxy war of the USA and NATO against Russia." In the view of Gerhard Giese, the conflict has developed "ever more directly the character of a worldwide social-systemic war (unilateralism versus multipolarity) between the USA (NATO) and Russia. The West and Ukraine, as claimed by neocon John Bolton recently in the *Wall Street Journal*, are aiming for a total victory over Russia, which is intended to first of all weaken the country and then break it up, Yugoslavia-fashion."

But the 'spring offensive' has not gone to plan: "The chief task of the Russian airforce is to keep the weapons delivered by the west far from the front. The SU-35 has been mostly kept back for a direct NATO attack but has been very effective in shooting down Ukrainian planes. The SU-35 is so good that it can successfully fight Western F-15 and F-16s. The SU-57 is going into production."

Gerhard Giese asks: "Are there chances for peace negotiations? We can assume that China, which has a

strong interest in globalised production and delivery chains, will actively seek a peaceful solution in the NATO-RF war." Such efforts have already begun: "According to the internet site *german-foreign-policy.com*, the USA and some European countries accept China as a negotiator in peace talks between Ukraine and Russia, which could take place after the offensive (in other words in autumn 2023). Reasons given for the changed attitude are the spiralling costs of the conflict, the dwindling support of the US population for the war in Ukraine and the presidential elections in 2024, which Biden wants to win again." [1]

This 'changed attitude' is reflected more recently in an article of 19th August by *Sky News's* military analyst, Sean Bell. He begins: "Ukraine's much-anticipated spring counter-offensive is now in its tenth week, with limited evidence of any significant breakthrough of the formidable Russian defences...Ukraine started its spring offensive in early June, but despite some ferocious fighting the Russian fortifications still appear largely intact. Although casualty figures are always hard to verify, it is evident that this latest phase of the battle has proven highly attritional, and Ukraine's offensive would expect to suffer significantly higher casualties, up to three times as many as its enemy. Ammunition and weapons are being consumed at a huge rate... Drone attacks on Moscow, Black Sea Fleet vessels, ammunition dumps and small communities liberated... are a sideshow to the main event."

Sean Bell assesses the reaction in the west: "Behind the scenes, Western leaders are starting to review

options. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg's chief of staff suggested in a recent interview that Ukraine might need to cede territory to find a lasting peace. Although he later apologised, this comment likely reflected a growing concern among Western leaders that by continuing to support Ukraine they become complicit in perpetuating this brutal – yet static – conflict... Weapons stockpiles are diminishing and there are limited reserves left to continue supporting Ukraine, especially given conflicting domestic priorities... Notwithstanding the public show of NATO and Western unity in support of Ukraine, behind the scenes there is growing concern about how to draw this conflict to an end." [2]

Can progressive forces in the West utilise this concern to push for a negotiated end to this conflict which has cost so many Ukrainian and Russian lives and which still endangers the peace of the whole world? The German initiative *Aufstehen* (Stand Up) issued a call for peace in advance of Anti-War Day 2023 – 1st September, remembering "the greatest human catastrophe – the Second World War" and the vow of the survivors "Never again Fascism, never again War!". *Aufstehen* said, "The traffic light government [so-called because it is a coalition of the Social Democratic Party, the Liberal Democratic Party and the Greens] has forgotten this lesson, this vow, and is stoking up

the war further by sanctioning the delivery of cluster bombs by the USA and the delivery of ever more weapons, going so far as to consider the delivery of cruise missiles. Germany is party to this war and the population is supposed to put up with ever more 'sacrifices' under the disgraceful and wrong slogan 'Freeze for Peace'. The only winners are the weapons firms, as well as the US fracking industry, and hedge funds like BlackRock and co.

"In the past weeks it was the 78th anniversary of the terrible atomic bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. On the 6th and 9th of August 1945, US-American bombers dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, the first and to date only time that a nation has deployed this annihilating force against another country – its civilian population – an immense war crime. In Nagasaki alone 70,000 people were killed directly and a further 75,000 wounded; altogether more than 200,000 people died of the direct and indirect results.... Atomic bombs are the existential challenge for all humanity, because they could destroy the earth and all life. Despite this danger the nuclear threat is too seldom discussed in public.

"And what does the German government do? It ignores international law, which forbids the development, production, testing, acquisition and deployment of nuclear weapons, refuses to join the nuclear weapons ban treaty, and adheres to the 'nuclear participation by the Bundeswehr with US-atomic bombs'. It attempts to excuse these dangerous errors with the lying cover of 'morality'. We demand that the government stop the hypocritical moralising and end the policy of escalation. Back to the policy of détente with Russia, dialogue with respect for each other's interests and an end to sanctions which chiefly harm ourselves. There must be security guarantees for Ukraine AND for Russia."

BRICS expands

Meanwhile in the developing multipolar world, Russia and China are at the heart of a range of organisations which are building a cooperative alternative to the aggressive approaches steered by the US, NATO and the EU. One of these is BRICS. The 15th BRICS summit took place from 22nd to 24th August in South Africa, bringing together the leaders of the world's leading emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. More than 20 nations have expressed an interest in joining BRICS and six new members were invited to join at the summit. These were Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This will more than double the number of members in the bloc. President of Brazil, Lula da Silva noted that, with the new additions, the bloc

Can progressive forces in the West utilise this concern to push for a negotiated end to this conflict which has cost so many Ukrainian and Russian lives and which still endangers the peace of the whole world?

will represent 46% of the world's population and even more of its economic output.

The president of the BRICS New Development Bank, Dilma Rousseff, former president of Brazil, emphasised the purpose of the Bank is to help member countries develop infrastructure and education and that it would be a good partner in Africa. She also recognised the challenge and importance of "the expansion of payment mechanisms, notably local currencies and other financial instruments that may eventually be created in order to build a new, more multilateral and inclusive financial system."

Prior to the summit, in June, the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Relations met in Cape Town. Their joint statement issued on 1st June indicates why this alliance is gaining popularity in competition with the coercive set-ups of the imperialist nations. The Ministers "reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening the framework of BRICS cooperation under the three pillars of political and security, economic and financial, and cultural and people-to-people cooperation, upholding the BRICS spirit and featuring mutual respect and understanding, equality, solidarity, openness, inclusiveness, and consensus."

They, "welcomed the readmission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the League of Arab States on 7 May 2023." Their view on sanctions, "The Ministers expressed concern about the use of unilateral coercive

measures, which are incompatible with the principles of the Charter of the UN and produce negative effects notably in the developing world."

The Friends of BRICS Foreign Ministers meeting followed on June 2nd. Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Comoros, Gabon, and Kazakhstan all sent representatives, and Egypt, Argentina, Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau and Indonesia participated virtually.

The next BRICS summit in 2024 will be held in Kazan in Russia.

Africa rejects western control

Africa is also the centre of growing opposition to the coercive policies and control of the USA and the former colonial powers. The latest country to rebel at the time of writing is Niger. Pro-Western President Mohamed Bazoum was ousted in a coup, led by General Abdourahmane Tchiani, on July 26th. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) initially threatened to intervene militarily, giving the coup leaders a seven-day deadline to restore Bazoum, a deadline which came and went. French broadcaster RFI – France is the former colonial power – said the bloc was mustering about 25,000 troops, mostly from Nigeria and Senegal. However, ECOWAS members Chad and Guinea opposed both sanctions on Niger and military deployment. The military governments in Burkina Faso and Mali said they would regard any move against Niger as a declaration of war against themselves. Niger has accused ECOWAS of acting as a proxy for France, which has bases and 1,500 soldiers in Niger. Niger’s uranium mines provide a substan-

tial amount of the fuel for France’s nuclear reactors. [3]

Niger and its neighbours have been severely affected by terrorist activities spreading from Libya, which was destroyed by NATO in 2011. Writing in March this year, Moussa Ibrahim, who in 2011 was spokesperson of the Libyan Government and Minister of Media, while exposing the lies told by the Western media to justify the destruction of his country, reminds us of why it really happened: “The actual ‘crimes’ of the Libyan revolutionary Government, however, were real and consequential: Gaddafi’s Libya was re-shaping the political, economic and cultural context of the African continent in radical and independent ways not seen since the nominal de-colonization of African countries in the 1950s and 1960s.

“On September 9th, 1999, under the leadership of Gaddafi, the establishment of the African Union was announced in his birthplace, the coastal town of Sirte (the very city in which he would fight his last battle against NATO in 2011). Gaddafi then announced the start of a major revo-

lutionary project for the plundered and exploited continent: building pan-African economic, security and communication institutions with the aim of gaining complete and true independence from the control of the West. The most consequential of these institutions were the African Central Bank, the African Golden Dinar, the African Gold Reserve, the African Security Council, the Unified African Army, the African Parliament, the African Organisation for Natural Resources, the African Communications Network and the African Common Market.” [4] Perhaps Colonel Gaddafi’s dreams are coming closer.

[1] Von einer Spezialoperation zum NATO-RF Krieg, Oberst a.d. Gerhard Giese, Rot-Fuchs, June 2023.

[2] Ukraine war: Zelensky still resolute – but West wobbles as spring counteroffensive stalls, Sean Bell, military analyst, Sky News, 19/8/23

[3] Niger’s neighbours set “D-Day” for intervention, Azerbaijan24, 19/8/23

[4] NATO bombed Libya to ‘protect civilians’ 12 years ago. This led to thousands of deaths and a country in ruins, Moussa Ibrahim, Azerbaijan24 18/3/23

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POLAND

does US bidding in Europe

by Simon Korner

Poland, which during the 1980s was one of the most powerful wedges used by NATO to weaken Soviet power, is once again proving extremely useful. In NATO's proxy war against Russia, not only has Poland pushed hard to escalate the conflict, demanding more – and more advanced – military aid to Ukraine, but it is also prominent in NATO's ideological crusade. Poland was the first country to pledge Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine and has since promised MiG-29 fighters. Poland's Ambassador to France has suggested direct Polish entry into the war if Ukraine looks like losing, a point echoed by former NATO chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen who envisaged Poland going in at the head of the Baltic states.

On the ideological front, soon after the war began Poland's prime minister called for the "de-Russification of the Polish and European economy". [1] The vilification reached new heights when Polish president Duda tried to ban Poland's opposition party led by Donald Tusk from office, accusing it of being pro-Russian. Russia's former president Medvedev has called Poland "the most vicious, vulgar and shrill critic of Russia". [2]

Poland is useful to NATO for other reasons too. It is playing a key role in bringing Germany into full alignment with US war aims and in the longer term diminishing German power. Polish rhetoric has been fiercely critical of Germany since the conflict began. It lambasted Germany for its initial hesitation in delivering tanks to Ukraine, while



Polish President Andrzej Duda in Ukraine

PHOTO BY JAKUB SZYMOCZUK

recently Polish diplomats attacked Germany and France for their "rotten response" to the war. [3] The US's use of Poland to pressure Germany into supplying tanks had the larger aim of forcing Germany to burn its bridges with Russia – to the point where, in January 2023, German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock announced, "we are fighting a war against Russia."

It's no coincidence that Poland has also demanded €1.3 trillion from Germany in reparations for the cost of World War 2, a demand refused by Germany. As Russian commentator Ilya Tsukanov observes: "Poland was almost certainly egged on by its overseas allies in Washington and London." [4] Such provocations predate the war. Jaroslaw Kaczynski, president of the ruling Law and Justice Party, accused Germany in December 2021 of seeking to create a Fourth Reich in Europe through its domination of the EU, in particular through the European Court of Justice, which is being used as an instrument to limit Pol-

ish sovereignty over its own laws and to promote euro-federalism. The US ambassador to Poland, Georgette Mosbacher, called EU criticism of Polish democracy "overblown" giving clear encouragement to Poland's bid to challenge German and EU power. [5]

Poland and NATO

Poland is now the new centre of NATO operations in Europe, and as such its status has risen rapidly. "Poland has become our most important partner in continental Europe," one senior US Army official said and is the "main hub for supplying arms to Ukraine". [6] While Germany, the traditional US ally in Europe since World War 2, remains central to NATO, it is Poland that is gaining a large new permanent US military presence with the US Army V Corps Forward Command base in Poland at Camp Kosciuszko (Camp K) the first such garrison in Poland and the eighth in Europe. Stars and Stripes, the US military newspaper, calls the establishment of Camp

K a 'milestone'. The number of US soldiers in Poland is now 10,000, according to the Polish Institute of International Affairs, with a further 4,000 in other eastern European countries. That's double the number there was before the sharp rise in tensions that led to Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

In addition, Poland has asked for US nuclear weapons to be stationed on its territory, while a US missile base is being built at Redzikowo to store offensive missiles aimed at Russia. Already US heavy strategic bombers are free to cross Polish airspace towards Russia, as part of NATO's 'air policing' of the Baltics, which involves aircraft that can carry both conventional and nuclear weapons.

Poland's expansionist ambitions

Poland's ambitions to become a major power in its own right are useful to the US and Britain. Poland's army of 150,000 troops is only slightly smaller than Germany's 170,000. But Poland plans to double its troops numbers to 300,000 by 2035 – making it the largest land army in Europe – and is raising its defence spending from 2.4% to 5% of GDP. Poland is a growing market for US arms manufacturers, paying €4.9 billion for 250 US Abrams tanks to replace the 240 Soviet-era tanks it has sent to Ukraine. It already has F-16 fighter planes and is buying 32 newer F-35s. It has, in addition, bought \$10-12 billion worth of arms from South Korea, as well as Italian Leonardo helicopters which will be assembled in Poland.

Poland now has ambitions to expand territorially by annexing the western parts of Ukraine it once owned – known as eastern Lesser Poland or eastern Galicia. Vladimir Kozin of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies believes Poland will make its move once Ukraine is sufficiently weakened by war.

Preparations are in hand. President Duda announced Polish aspirations to remove the "physical border between Poland and Ukraine after the war. Especially when Ukraine becomes a member of the European Union". [7] Ukrainian 'patriot' Zelensky has cleared the ground from Ukraine's side for the ceding of his country to its northern neighbour. On a recent visit to Poland he announced: "In the future, there will be no borders between our peoples: political, economic and – what is very important – historical". [8] Such a union of Poland and the rump of Ukraine could become the second-largest country in the EU and a major military power.

As the biggest and wealthiest country in Central and Eastern Europe, Poland seeks regional hegemony through alliances such as the 3 Seas Initiative (3SI). 3SI was established in 2015, in line with a plan drawn up by the US's Atlantic Council, with the aim of expanding Poland's sphere of influence. Its model is the post-World War 1 'Intermarium', which Poland's nationalist leader Jozef Pilsudski envisaged as a federation encompassing Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine, in turn based on the vast seventeenth century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Britain, Europe's leading warmonger, has made a separate trilateral pact with Poland and Ukraine – outside NATO and the EU in which Germany and France have a voice. The pact's purpose is to deepen east-European Atlanticism, according to the British-based Council on Geostrategy linked to the MoD, and to act as a counterweight to Germany and France, constraining the two main EU powers.

This strategy of pitting Europe's east versus west was one developed first by Donald Rumsfeld in 2003 when he condemned France and Germany as "old Europe" for refusing to join the US "Coalition of the Willing" in Iraq and hailed the "new Europe" of the post-Socialist countries, enfeebled and more amenable to US control.

German power

While Germany has been forced by the US to sabotage its own economy during the course of the Ukraine war, as the price of staying within the privileged US imperialist bloc on whose power it depends, Germany remains the leading European country, with eastern European countries like Poland economically subordinate to it and integrated into its economy. Poland produces washing machines for Bosch-Siemens, engines for Daimler and cars for VW. Bilateral trade grew 14% last year, according to Michał Baranowski, director of the German Marshall Fund's office in Warsaw. Recently, Mercedes-Benz announced the construction of a €1bn plant to make electric vans in Jawor, southwestern Poland. One third of all Polish exports go to Germany.

The often touted success story of Poland in the EU overlooks the fact that it is still only 22nd among the 27 EU member states in terms of GDP per capita in purchasing power parity terms, despite having risen from 50% to 73% of the European average between 1990 and 2019 and despite overtaking Greece in 2015. Polish wages are well under half the average European wage, with labour costs in Poland €10 per hour, compared to €27 per hour as an average across the EU. Even though wages are rising, Poland will remain a "rather poorer country by EU standards", according to Aleksander Laszek, chief economist at the Civil Development Forum thinktank in Warsaw. It is these low wages that attracted firms like Google, Samsung and others to invest in Poland in 2022. The final quarter of 2022 saw a 2.4% slump in Polish GDP, far worse than other European countries, according to Notes from Poland. If the German economic slowdown continues, Poland will face still greater difficulties. It has already lost hundreds of thousands of people of working age to emigration to higher wage countries and relies on its



PHOTO BY GARRISON WAITES

Unveiling ceremony for Camp Kosciuszko. On left Polish Defence Minister Mariusz Blaszczak and second left, Darryl Williams, Commanding General US Army Europe and Africa

□600 billion in EU funding, which is far from guaranteed.

Cheap labour and manufacture from Poland and other east European countries has underpinned German imperialism’s growth since the defeat of Socialism and the unification of Germany. That unequal relationship persists.

Germany dominates the EU

Germany is visiting the pain it has received at the hands of the USA on the other EU countries, especially the poorer east-European ones, by acting as the Union’s “economic policeman”. It continues to drive the very strict debt-reduction plan of the European Commission, based on the 1997 Stability and Growth Pact, which forces EU member countries to impose austerity if their deficit to GDP ratio rises above 3%. Such economic bullying is now exacerbated by the funnelling of funds towards the Ukraine war and away from welfare and productive investment, to the huge detriment of European working class living standards.

Germany is also pushing to end the unanimity required to decide EU foreign policy, in favour of majority voting. This would enable it to impose its will by whipping a bloc of dependent EU countries into

line. According to Polish prime minister Morawiecki discussing the EU, “the political reality shows that the weight of the German and French voices is dominant. We are dealing with a formal democracy but a de-facto oligarchy where the power is held by those who are the strongest.” [9]

Moreover, the EU is tightening its grip on national courts within the Union as a way of achieving tighter EU integration through law rather than through treaties which are far harder to achieve. This latter, more political approach, is favoured by France. Germany wants to maintain its leading edge through the EU’s “aggressive attempts to impose its integrationist and socially progressive values across Central and Eastern Europe” as Thomas Fazi puts it. [10] From Poland’s point of view, “the threat to [it’s] sovereignty from the west [ie Germany and the EU] is greater than from the east” as one Polish MEP asserted. [11]

In order to push back, Poland is leveraging its developing partnership with the USA and Britain. Its ambitions clearly align with the US aim of shifting Europe’s balance of power towards the “new Europe” which is more responsive to US control and more unambiguously warlike against Russia.

Popular disaffection

There are signs of public disaffection in Poland and Germany with both the war in Ukraine and the EU. Polish farmers forced their government to shut off imports of Ukrainian grain – supposedly transiting Poland – which flooded the market. Polish opinion polls also show growing doubts as to a Ukrainian military victory. There is also a ten point rise since 2022 (up from 33% to 45%) in those who believe EU membership limits Polish sovereignty too much.

In Germany war scepticism has been expressed in a number of ways, including the 800,000 signatures to the petition launched by Die Linke MPs Sahra Wagenknecht and Selim Dagdelen and in the booing of Scholz at an SPD public meeting. Support for the far-right AfD is growing and now stands at 19% in the polls. The AfD is reactionary in the Farage mould, it is Eurosceptic and also sceptical about arming Ukraine. Many AfD voters, particularly in eastern Germany retain residual cultural empathy with Russia. The changing mood extends well beyond the AfD – 55% of Germans now favour negotiations to end the war, while 56% say they are Eurosceptic. With real wages in Germany having fallen for the past two years, support is waning for the Ukraine war and EU austerity.

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- [1] *Newsweek*, 21/3/22
 - [2] *Newsweek*, 22/3/22
 - [3] *Daily Express*, 3/6/23 & 4/6/23
 - [4] *The Intel Drop*, 4/1/23
 - [5] *Reuters*, 18/7/20),
 - [6] *Politico*, 21/11/22 & CNN, 10/6/23
 - [7] *Eastern Herald*, 5/4/23
 - [8] *Ukrainian News*, 5/4/23
 - [9] *DW*, 16/8/22
 - [10] *Unherd*, 17/4/23
 - [11] *deliberatio*, 19/1/23

NATO'S CYBER WARFARE



Bees in the service of NATO

PR PHOTO BY SID MOSEDELL

by Claire Bailey

“Ukraine is hosting one of the great epics of this century. We are Harry Potter and William Wallace, the Na’vi and Han Solo. We’re escaping from Shawshank and blowing up the Death Star. We are fighting with the Harkonnens and challenging Thanos.” So says NATO on its X (Twitter) account 23/2/23. NATO marked the passing of the first year of the war it provoked in Ukraine in a number of ways. The tweet above, that sounds like a warm-up for a TV game show, was one of them. Since then, it’s had 30.5 million views.

The tweet comes from an account on NATO’s website called ‘Pavlo’s story’. Pavlo presents himself as an average man of the people with an unexceptional history, a patriot who enlisted in the first days of the conflict and has fought on the frontline ever since. In fact, Pavlo Kazarin is a well-known Ukrainian TV journalist with longstanding connections to the West, amongst them a spell working for US government-funded Radio Liberty. He has also written regularly for the New Voice of Ukraine (NV), an avowedly independent outfit that actually works with the US Embassy in Kiev. NV launched its English language version in January 2022 just as Ukrainian forces were stepping up shelling of the Donbas. Far from the frontline, Kazarin was in the UK in the autumn of 2022, attending the Hay-on-Wye book festival to promote his book ‘The Wild West of Eastern Europe’, recipient of a BBC Ukraine prize.

There has been almost no live reporting of this conflict, not even from embedded journalists and photographers. It gets easier and easier to make it sound like a Hollywood

movie. “Ukraine is hosting one of the great epics of the century.” It’s hard to imagine language more cynically indifferent to the 300,000 deaths the Ukrainian Armed Forces are estimated to have sustained on behalf of NATO. The populations of NATO countries are being increasingly anaesthetised to the realities of war the closer it gets to home.

Cyber warfare

While the war in Ukraine is being fought conventionally using human bodies on the ground, it has also been an opportunity to test new electronic warfare (EW) technologies – drones, guided missiles, communications, surveillance – all dependent on well-defended computer systems. Cyber security is a rapidly growing and highly profitable area of development whose cutting edge is the preserve of companies not traditionally part of the military-industrial complex (MIC). The MIC is expanding beyond arms manufacturers like Lockheed Martin, Raytheon and BAE Systems to include specialist cyber companies like PaloAlto, Trustify, and others that are household names providing domestic services – Amazon, Google and Microsoft.

Compared with the carefully phased pace of NATO’s delivery of conventional military hardware to Ukraine over the last 18 months, cyber support for the government and the military arrived at lightning speed, effecting what has been described as the digital transformation of Ukraine. Amazon is reported to have responded to a public call for help from the government in Kiev the week before Russia’s Special Military Operation (SMO) began [1]. Soon after, data from Ukrainian ministries, universities and Ukraine’s biggest financial institution, PrivatBank,

had all been transferred to Amazon Web Services.

Elon Musk’s Starlink system of satellites operated by SpaceX provided a secure internet service to the Ukrainian military within weeks. Zelensky uses Starlink to communicate with NATO. It has become an indispensable part of the country’s critical infrastructure.

Likewise, Microsoft has been working closely with the Ukrainian government, including round-the-clock live sharing of what its corporate vice-president Tom Burt calls ‘threat intelligence’. Before the SMO began, the Ukrainian government had already transferred the data from its servers in Kiev to the Microsoft cloud. Not to be outdone, Google donated 50,000 Google Workspace licences to Kiev and helped the government set up a system to send air raid alerts to mobile phones. Google Cloud provides cyber threat intelligence. [2]

Tsvetalina J Benthem of Oxford University puts it like this in her paper - *Privatised Frontlines: Private Sector Contributions in Armed Conflict* - delivered at the NATO CyCon Conference in Tallinn this year: ‘...the success of a military effort increasingly hinges on, among others, the security of networks supporting critical infrastructure...’ In other words, without dominant cyber security you can’t now win a war. For the US military, aware of its increasing dependence on the private technology sector, the sector’s full integration into the military industrial complex is proceeding too slowly. As they see it, there are as yet no legally binding rules of engagement for cyber space and, something several sources have stressed, no equivalent of NATO’s Article 5 for private companies. What that would look like in practice is anybody’s guess.

In a recent interview with a cyber security publication, NATO’s head of cyber policy, Christian-Marc

Liflander, says NATO and civilian tech companies need far closer collaboration. In a further extension of its powers, NATO needs to act as “a political platform” and impose cyber security norms across the alliance without delay. [3]

For Liflander the UK’s National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) is exemplary. Part of GCHQ, the NCSC has been developing partnerships with private companies for some years now through its Industry 100 (i100) scheme. “i100 is the principal initiative from the NCSC to facilitate close collaboration with the best and most diverse minds in UK industry...” Since 2017, secondees

Raising the tolerance of ordinary people to the real violence of war is a major part of NATO’s work on social media.

from key companies have been trained up by the NCSC and, the website says that they have “[benefitted] from government information’. That is, they have been drawn into military planning and are part of the stealthy militarisation of the whole economy. The website adds: “Every citizen, business and government department has a part to play...” The explicit inclusion of citizens in the government’s “democratic and responsible” cyber strategy is ominous. [4]

In the same interview, and in line with current NATO management of the way its warmongering is described to the public, Liflander explains that NATO is at risk of being too accommodating in the cyber realm. “We are kind of deterred by ourselves.”, he says. But, he adds, we have to remember

that cyber “is always on”, the suggestion being that NATO is now permanently at war in the cyber realm and can’t afford to stop at cyber ‘defence’. Liflander insists it must develop “threat hunting” capacity, with a view to conducting pre-emptive cyber strikes.

Honeyed words

Raising the tolerance of ordinary people to the real violence of war is a major part of NATO’s work on social media. It’s why it describes war as if it’s a Harry Potter film and it’s why it keeps bees.

“On a bright summer day, staff joined the NATO beekeeper at the honey harvesting workshop at Alliance Headquarters in Brussels on Thursday (10/8/23) Around 350 jars of NATO honey were sold at the NATO Charity Bazaar in November 2022, and Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg gifted jars of NATO honey to ambassadors in the North Atlantic Council last December.” – it was reported on the NATO website.

There seems to be no limit to the level of violence acceptable to journalists like David Ignatius of *The Washington Post*, who, in a recent article about developments in the war in Ukraine, wrote: “...for the United States and its NATO allies these 18 months of war have been a strategic windfall, at relatively low cost (other than for the Ukrainians).” A sentiment worthy of a NATO tweet.

[1] *Politico*, July 2022

[2] *Business@War: the IT Companies Helping to Defend Ukraine*, 2023 NATO CCD-COE Publications

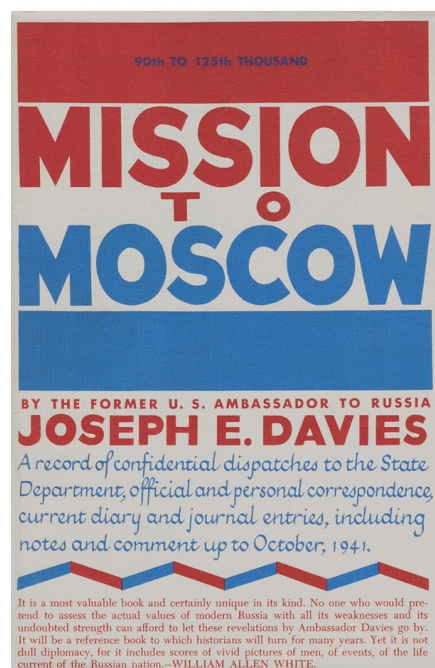
[3] *The Record*, 10/11/23

[4] *gov.uk cyber laws updated to boost UK’s resilience against online attacks*, November 2022

MISSION TO MOSCOW

by Joseph E. Davies
(Victor Gollanz 1942)

Review by Milly Cunningham



Joseph E. Davies was United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1936 to 1938. He describes Mission to Moscow as, “A record of confidential dispatches to the State Department, official and personal correspondence, current diary and journal entries, including notes and comment up to October 1941.”

Davies explains, “I had not intended writing a book but times have changed. Russia is in the thick of this fight...” He continues, ‘In our country there has been...misinformation about Russia and the Soviet Union...I am definitely not a Communist,” he says. “I am called a capitalist, but I think that the better word is ‘individualist’...[however] When I went to Russia, I made up my mind that I was going to go there free from prejudice and with an open mind.” He concludes, “I came to have a deep respect and affection for the Russian people.”

Seeing for himself

During his stay, Davies made a point of travelling to many parts of the Soviet Union to see for himself. Litvinov, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, with whom Davies had many conversations, expressed the view that he had acquired more information and knowledge of Russia in the first three months he was in the country than any other Ambassador had obtained in two years. Davies reported in March 1937 to President Roosevelt on ten days of travel through the country’s industrial districts. “What these people have done in the past seven years in heavy industry is unique... Bare plains have been transformed into huge industrial areas within six years. The plants and equipment which I saw are first-class... All these plants have laboratories, technical libraries, nightly lectures. Their factory cost accounting is translated into graphic charts, showing both operations and trends up to the minute. Each plant has its kindergartens (creches for nursing mothers), workers’ clubs, restau-

rants, and other social provisions for the workers...The planning impresses the mind as being most extraordinary in the boldness of its conception and the vigour of its execution.” He adds, “Granted five or ten years of peace, extraordinary results will be developed by this industrial programme.”

During his time in the Soviet Union, Davies visited art exhibitions and attended the opera, theatre and ballet, and everywhere he was impressed at the quality of what he saw. These experiences spoiled him, for he says on his way back home on leave he stopped off in Paris, “We went to the opera, Marouf, the Cobbler of Cairo. We did not stay long. Outside of the singing and one male dancer it was quite below par and couldn’t compare with the Russian opera of either Moscow or Lenin-grad.”

Davies enthusiastically describes the three days of national holiday to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet revolution, and the festive atmosphere all over Moscow, the huge flags, the red bunting, the slogans, large murals by prominent artists attached to the sides of buildings. In the parade in Red Square, with up to 1,200,000 participants, as well as “a first-class exhibition of military strength”. He adds, “The most impressive feature of the Red Square celebration to me personally was the demonstration of marching workers...a perfect sea of standards, transparencies, banners with slogans, and small allegorical models which were being carried by thousands of apparently enthusiastic marchers.”

Three of what are usually termed in the west ‘show trials’ took place while Davies was ambassador. He attended all sessions of two of them. Davies reports of the first trial, “With an interpreter at my side, I followed the testimony carefully. Naturally I must confess that I was predisposed against the credibility of the testimony of the defendants.” However, “I

arrived at the reluctant conclusion that the state had established its case, at least to the extent of proving the existence of a widespread conspiracy and plot among the political leaders against the Soviet government.” Davies also reports that all but possibly one of the diplomatic corps in Moscow agreed. However, he also notes that another diplomat made a revealing comment. He “said that the defendants were undoubtedly guilty; that all of us who attended the trial had practically agreed on that; that the outside world, from the press reports, however, seemed to think that the trial was a put-up job (façade, as he called it); that while we knew it was not, it was probably just as well that the outside world should think so.” The reactions of Davies and those of his fellow diplomats who attended the second trial were the same.

Lead up to war

Davies’s observations on the period up to and after the conclusion of what is usually referred to as the Hitler-Stalin pact are particularly interesting. His conversations with Litvinov revealed the deep concern the Soviet leadership had about the danger of war. Writing to the US Secretary of State on March 26th 1937, he quoted Litvinov as believing “the only hope for the preservation of European peace as a prompt, firm declaration of the democracies of Europe that they were standing together for peace; he named France, Russia and Czechoslovakia,” and hoped the United States would join as well. The Soviet leadership emphasised the importance of collective security in facing the aggressor nations, and an end to constant retreat. Davies reported many times his fears over the signs that England and France were trying to leave Russia out of any peace agreements. In September 1937 he reported to the US Secretary of State and mentioned England’s “recent advances to Germany, which appear to be at the expense of the Soviet Union.”

Davies had no doubt about the threat of German attack on the Soviet Union. He writes, “This menace very obviously is constantly in the forefront of the minds of this government. Hitler’s plan, as outlined in Mein Kampf and subsequently elaborated upon in his Nuremberg speech, in which the grain fields of the Ukraine were specifically mentioned, the Drang nach Osten, all point to this possibility.” On January 18th 1939, Davies writes to a friend, “Conditions are hell over here. Chamberlain’s peace is a flop...there is neither collective security nor a balance of power to secure peace and the civilization of Europe... Specifically there is one thing that can be done now in my opinion and that is to give some encouragement to Russia to remain staunch for collective security and peace. The reactionaries of England and France have quarantined her...The Chamberlain policy of throwing Italy, Poland, and Hungary into the arms of Hitler may be completed by so disgusting the Soviets that it will drive Russia into an economic agreement and an ideological truce with Hitler. The reactionaries of England and France will shortly be wooing the Soviets’ support in their desperation, but it may be too late if the Soviets get utterly disheartened.”

In his diary on April 3rd 1939, Davies, on a visit to London, writes that he had advised Joseph Kennedy, US Ambassador to the UK, to “tell Chamberlain from me that if they aren’t careful they would drive Stalin into Hitler’s arms. Britain and France had snubbed Russia, their then ally, by excluding the Soviets from Munich...that Stalin wanted peace for Russia above all else; that he might decide to take Hitler as the best bet for this security, at least for the time being...Somehow or other it seems impossible to make an impression in this London atmosphere.” In his journal of May 31st 1939, Davies quotes Molotov’s speech on Soviet foreign relations, “He said: ‘We stand for peace and against aggression, but we must

remember Stalin’s admonition that we cannot be used to pull the chestnuts of others out of the fire’...The British and French did not meet, he said, the requirements of full reciprocity and equality of obligations in their proposals.”

On 22nd August, 1939, the Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression agreement was announced in the press. On that day Davies writes to the Acting US Secretary of State, “The development of this non-aggression pact between Russia and Germany to me was not unexpected...During the Litvinov tenure in the Foreign Office...the Soviet regime, in my opinion, diligently and vigorously tried to maintain a vigorous common front against the aggressors and were sincere advocates of the ‘indivisibility of peace’”. But since Munich, and even before, distrust had grown with the Chamberlain and Daladier governments. “During the Soviet-British-French negotiations, including the sessions of the Strang mission and Military Missions to Moscow, this distrust was intensified by the fact that these authorities were not clothed with power to close a final, definite realistic alliance. The suspicion continued to grow that Britain and France were playing a diplomatic game to place the Soviets in a position where Russia would have to fight Germany alone.” And so the Soviet leaders, “characteristically boldly reversed their attitude and decided to secure their own position by making a pact of non-aggression with Germany, which would assure peace for Russia, at least for a time, regardless of any possibility of war in Europe.” On September 25th 1939, Davies writes, “The Moscow-Berlin pact was probably one of the greatest diplomatic defeats the British Empire ever sustained.”

Soviet objectives

Davies continued to analyse the situation in Europe, writing on October 12th 1939, “I am disposed to the opinion that the Russian policy may

“Conditions are hell over here. Chamberlain’s peace is a flop... there is neither collective security nor a balance of power to secure peace and the civilization of Europe...”

be exactly what she proclaims it to be; namely, a desire to establish peace in Europe if she can, and particularly on her eastern border, and in addition thereto to develop her own resources secure from attack of the capitalistic western nations. To effect this security, naturally, the Soviets would desire to have their western line shoved as far west from Moscow and the Don Basin as possible, as a protection against a possible enemy Germany.” Responding to accusations that Russia had designs on other countries, Davies said, “Stalin’s whole plan since 1926 has been to develop an internal economy that would be self-sufficient and create a socialistic communistic community that would be a model for the world; and he said to me himself that they figured for him and his associates to achieve that was a man-sized job and as much as they could do, without trying to run the whole world.”

Writing in November 1939, Davies adds, in relation to England and France, “Molotov declared the policy of the USSR to be one of neutrality. Thus Hitler...paid a very high price...there are indicators that the Russians will not really cooperate; that the Soviets are pursuing an independent policy based solely on self-interest and that Hitler is not too happy about it.” In his journal on March 30th 1940, Davies writes, “In the speech of Premier Molotov, Foreign Minister, before the

Supreme Council of the Soviet Union on March 29, this significant statement appeared: “We must maintain our position of neutrality and must refrain from participation in the war between the great powers. This policy not only serves the interests of the Soviet Union, but also exercises a restraining influence on attempts to kindle and spread the war in Europe.” As Davies reported, the Soviet Union continued with its policy of neutrality after the defeat of France and the entry of Italy into the war.

On March 3rd 1941, when the Bulgarian government consented to the entry of German troops into Bulgaria, Davies notes in his diary, “The Soviet Foreign Office formally notified the Bulgarian Minister that...this action led not to peace but to an extension of the sphere of war, and that the Soviet government conforming to its peace policy would not support the Bulgarian government in the execution of their present policy. This is going pretty far in opposition to Hitler’s plans.” The Soviet Union also in March confirmed to Turkey that if she had to defend her territory, she could rely on Russia complying entirely with the non-aggression pact between the two countries, and could count on the neutrality of the USSR.

Once Germany attacked the Soviet Union, on June 22nd 1941, Davies’s position did not waver. He reports in his journal the following day that after an alumni dinner in Washington, he spoke to the correspondent for the United Press, “I said that it was all to the good for the Western democracies...that, in my opinion, the extent of the resistance of the Red Army would amaze and surprise the world; and even though Hitler were to take a substantial part of the Ukraine, his troubles would then just begin, in my opinion. It was just plain common sense for us to give the Soviets all the aid we possibly could, because they were fighting the greatest danger to our security in the world, the menace of Hitler’s

aggression and lust for world domination. It was based upon what I myself had seen in Russia.”

International cooperation betrayed

Finally, Davies had his own response to those who equated the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany. He writes in his journal on July 7th 1941, “To my amazement, I find that my friend, Lindbergh, is quoted that he would prefer Nazism to Communism...It would be a desperate choice to make, but there is a very widespread difference between the two...the Christian religion could be imposed upon the communistic principles without doing any violence to its economic and political purposes, the primary one of which is based upon “the brotherhood of men”...Nazi philosophy creates a government which is in fact based upon the denial of the altruistic principles of the Christian religion... To it, war is a virtue. Brotherly love, charity, justice, and Christian virtues are indications of weakness and decadence if they conflict with the utilitarian needs of the state... The communistic ideal is that the state may evaporate and be no longer necessary as man advances into perfect brotherhood. The Nazi ideal is the exact opposite – that the state is the supreme end of all.”

In Davies’s Last Word he says, “In my opinion, the Russian people, the Soviet government, and the Soviet leaders are moved, basically, by altruistic concepts. It is their purpose to promote the brotherhood of man and to improve the lot of the common people. They wish to create a society in which men may live as equals, governed by ethical ideals. They are devoted to peace. They have made great sacrifices attempting to achieve those spiritual aspirations.” He had hopes of a future of international cooperation against “denizens of a jungle whose only rule is that of tooth and claw” – hopes sadly to be dashed, chiefly by the leaders of his own country.

Tory infighting and Starmer's faulty strategy

by Frieda Park

The Tory Party's problems have not disappeared with Rishi Sunak's leadership. He doesn't get the same hysterical coverage that Jeremy Corbyn got as leader of the Labour Party when he faced a revolt among his right wing MPs but that doesn't diminish the difficulties that the Tory Party faces.

Some individual Tory MPs, like the Labour traitors who formed Change UK to undermine Corbyn, are making themselves sacrificial lambs and are in the process damaging the Party. This has led to three MPs resigning, including the former leader, Boris Johnson - two resulting by-elections have already happened. Labour overturned a massive majority to win Selby and Ainsty from the Tories but failed to win Johnson's former seat. This was widely blamed on the Labour London Mayor's Ultra Low Emission Scheme and its impact on car owners and small businesses. That will not be repeated across the country. A further by-election caused by the resignation of a Tory who was suspended from the Party was a win for the Lib Dems again overturning a huge Tory majority.

Whatever Nadine Dorries, Boris Johnson and others might hope for after a Tory defeat at the next general election, the establishment has been intent on trying to steady the ship and will not want a return to the erratic governments of Truss and Johnson. Furthermore, they want the Tory Party to survive and be reformed, turning it back towards being pro-EU. Even with Johnson sidelined for now, they

have a long and difficult road to travel. Sunak might not be to Dorries's taste but he is as much a supporter of Brexit as his immediate predecessors in Downing St.

Starmer's faulty strategy

Given the mess the Tories are in and the hardships being endured by the people of Britain, Starmer looks a shoo in for prime minister at the next election - at present polls are giving him a landslide. A period of Labour in power would certainly allow Britain to move back closer to the EU, something fervently hoped for in the quality capitalist press like *The Financial Times*.

Though there is widespread support for Labour, just how strong is that support and how susceptible might it be to erosion? Starmer is currently very much reliant on the support of the press but that cannot be taken for granted if they start to boost Ed Davey and give out a message that Sunak is not such a bad chap. It is to be expected that we will see the Lib Dems being promoted again now that sufficient time has passed since their policy betrayals when in coalition with the Tories under David Cameron and Nick Clegg. A Labour-Lib Dem government would suit the establishment better than a landslide Labour government.

But the media is not the only thing that should worry Starmer. The Tories have easy attack lines against him for his numerous policy U turns, effectively adopting their policies, and for a lack of actual policies of his own. It is not just the left in Labour that is unhap-

py with the dramatic rightward lurch, the purging of members and exclusion of credible candidates from selection shortlists. Sections of the right, including within the trade unions are also unhappy. But despite the disquiet there is also a sense that no one wants to rock the boat before a general election. Party members, however, may be somewhat demotivated which will not help campaigning.

The massive poll leads for Labour do not so much reflect huge enthusiasm for Starmer, as a profound disenchantment with the Tories. His personal polling isn't great which also leaves him vulnerable. On 14th August a YouGov poll found that 49% of voters thought he was doing badly as Labour leader and only 30% thought he was doing well. He doesn't however fare quite as badly as Rishi Sunak where 60% thought he was doing badly as Prime Minister and 27% thought he was doing well.

Starmer is currently very much reliant on the support of the press but that cannot be taken for granted if they start to boost Ed Davey and give out a message that Sunak is not such a bad chap.

Labour also needs to win back seats in Scotland to secure a majority Labour government. The dominant Scottish National Party is also in the middle of huge meltdown and the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by election will be a crucial test of whether their vote can hold up. From dismal performances in recent years, Labour is now catching up with the SNP in opinion polls.

A failure to inspire voters to turn out may mean that they don't rush to the polls on election day, especially if they think Labour is going to win anyway. So Starmer's strategy could begin to crack if the

media shifts its stance and if the general public sees no particular reason to go out and vote Labour. He will in all likelihood win the next general election, but perhaps not by the crushing margins currently being predicted.

Although the electorate may not have high hopes of a Labour government, even the modest hopes they have may be dashed by the total lack of ambition and rightward charge by Starmer's team. The comparison is often made with New Labour, but Starmer will be inheriting a much worse economic situation than Tony Blair did. If he

continues on his uninspiring way, he would be extremely lucky to survive another election.

Trade unions battle on

Away from electoral considerations the unions battle on to try to defend their members from the devastating attacks on their living standards and the destruction of public services. But the Tories continue to turn a deaf ear, planning to win a war of attrition and only giving minor concessions, if any at all. Whatever else is happening, support for workers in struggle should be a top priority.

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