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KINGSTON PEACE NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL / CAMPAIGN FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

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China 'Cold War' being planned by US

We are heading towards a new Cold War. With Russia bogged down in its illegal war against Ukraine the West, principally the USA supported as ever by the UK, has decided it's time to 'take on' China.

It is, in the words of Harvard professor Graham Allison, the classic case of "ruling power versus rising power" The US, losing it hegemony and with its own democracy looking ever more fragile under the assault of Trumpism, is faced with the (for it) unnerving prospect of an economically vibrant China.

But Prof Allison goes on to draw a chilling corollary. In the early 20th century, he contends the ruling power was Great Britain and the rising European power Germany that led to an arms race - principally in naval vessels - and competition at every opportunity. But then apparently disconnected events occurred, one particularly in Sarajevo, and nations obligated to support one another through a web of treaties found themselves in World War One.

An article in The Independent

also raises alarm at what the author - American-Iranian writer Borzou Daragahi - characterises as the "gratuitous confrontation between nuclear powers" the US and China, risking getting out of hand.

He notes that the influential American news and opinion website *Foreign Policy* recently published six pieces demanding US and Western policymakers confront China more forcefully on human rights, climate change, quantum computing, shipping

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UK troops in Ukraine

NATO troops, half of them from the UK, are on the ground in Ukraine fighting Russia, a leak of documents from the Pentagon has confirmed.

The Times headlined the news of the leak as putting the lives of the 50 British special forces soldiers at risk ignoring the fact that the presence of NATO troops from the UK, US, France and other nations constitutes a dangerous escalation of the conflict and provides evidence that bears out Russian claims that it is actually at war with NATO.

Members of KPC/CND joined the national CND contingent outside the MoD during the Extinction Rebellion's recent four days of protests.



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China 'Cold War' being planned by US

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finance and the production of microchips. "A new cold war is being thrust upon the world" he writes, "one that could shape our lives and nations for decades to come."

On one side the US-led alliance that includes NATO and the major Asia-Pacific alliances and on the other a Eurasian-led one of China and Russia with North Korea, Belarus and Iran. Latin America, the Middle East and Africa are keen to remain unaligned but, he fears, could turn into battlegrounds between the two camps.

Western voters and citizens needed to get involved and wake up to the dangers stacking up. There was at least some nuance in Europe with France's President Macron and the EU Commission president Ursula Von Der Leyen making overtures to Beijing.

Daragahi does not spare criticism of China for its human rights violations against the Uyghur and Tibetan minorities and its lack of outright criticism of Putin's invasion of Ukraine but goes on to admit that the US and its partners regularly practice the same sort of human rights abuses. "and," he adds, "the US is among world history's greatest bullies".

Economic dependency

Even though the West was now attempting to dismantle its deep economic dependency on China the fact remained that the US was, in his words, "addicted to Asian debt" owing \$1.85 trillion in China and Japan.

There was a need for vigorous debate about China in Western societies but what should be avoided at all costs would be "to lazily slide into a de facto global war promoted by the same Washington foreign policy fixtures that brought about the disastrous wars in Vietnam, Iraq and the global war on terror."

Stop press: there are recent signs that the headlong march of anti-China rhetoric is beginning to alarm some on both sides of the Atlantic. The *FT* has reported that US Treasury Secretary Janet Yelland warned that America decoupling from China would be "disastrous" for both nations as hawks continued to call for the US to stop trading with its Asian rival. Meanwhile British Foreign Secretary James Cleverly was reported in *The Guardian* saying the UK should not "pull the shutters down" on trade with China.

Aussies break ranks over Assange trial

Australian politicians are pressing the US Attorney General to abandon his call for Wikileaks boss Julian Assange to be extradited from the UK to stand trial in America.

Some four dozen Australian MPs and senators from across the political spectrum are opposing the extradition application on the grounds of press freedom.

They have told US Attorney General Merrick Garland that prosecuting Assange, an Australian citizen, would set a dangerous precedent and damage the US reputation internationally.

Deportation

Assange has been held in Britain's Belmarsh Prison for four years. Significantly, the letter states that "If the extradition request is approved Australians will witness the deportation of one of our citizens from one Aukus partner to another - our closest strategic ally."

Clearly this appeal is something that neither Britain or the US foresaw when it concluded the anti-China Aukus agreement recently.

Editor's note: Assange, if extradited, tried and convicted in the US, faces the prospect of being sent to jail for 175 years, i.e. for the rest of his life. Yet, the young US serviceman Jack Teixeira, accused of being responsible for the most recent leak of Pentagon top secret papers, would only face 15 years in prison if convicted. The latest leak has apparently exposed, among many other things, Ukraine's complete spring offensive plans against the Russian invasion and has also made it clear that American intelligence has spies embedded in the Kremlin's security apparatus; a revelation that clearly puts lives at risk.

Consider also that Chelsea Manning, the American soldier who passed secrets to Julian Assange, only served seven years out of a 35-year sentence as his prison term was commuted by Barack Obama.

Clearly, US service personnel can get away lightly with betraying their country's secrets but if you're an investigative journalist and a foreign one to boot...!

It makes even more nonsense of the First Amendment to the US Constitution that guarantees freedom of the press.

Ukraine: A problematic response?

Vladimir Putin's illegal and brutal invasion of Ukraine has rightly been condemned internationally but the view as to the causes and what to do next has proved more problematic.

There is the widespread view among many in the peace movement that NATO must shoulder some of the blame for its actions in recent years of continually provoking Russia by pushing the boundaries of the Alliance ever closer. There is an alternate view that NATO is in no way to blame and that the only sensible option in the face of Russian aggression is to continue to arm Ukraine to the teeth with whatever weaponry it desires to beat back Putin's troops.

Looming over all is the incontrovertible fact that Russia and NATO between them possess most of the world's nuclear arsenal. Putin has not been reluctant to make belligerent noises concerning the use of 'tactical nuclear weapons' while NATO governments and a range of commentators have chosen to play down this threat.

The fact remains that there are those within the NATO member countries who have jumped at the chance to take on Russia with weapons that have been designed for years with just that purpose in mind. The military industrial complex has been having a field day and there is a suspicion that some military people and politicians within the Alliance are quite prepared to fight Russia to the last Ukrainian!

But how did we get to this pass in the first quarter of the 21st century?

The Russian invasion would not have come as a surprise to many highly placed strategic thinkers who had over the years opined that the endless eastward expansion of NATO was storing up trouble.

Tragic mistake

Among these commentators was George Kennan, an American foreign policy strategist and architect of the Cold War concept who in 1998 warned that NATO expansion was a "tragic mistake" that could ultimately provoke a "bad reaction from Russia."

In the year prior to that comment Jack F Matlock Jr, who was US ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1987 to 1991, said the NATO expansion was "the most profound strategic blunder

(encouraging) a chain reaction that could produce the most serious security threat ... since the Soviet Union collapsed."

William Perry, Defense Secretary under President Bill Clinton, wrote in his memoirs that NATO enlargement was the cause of "the rupture in relations in Russia." Former UK ambassador to Russia Sir Roderic Lyne described in 2021 pushing Ukraine towards membership of NATO as "stupid on every level," adding "if you want to start a war with Russia that's the best way of doing it."

Reconciliation

Even Henry Kissinger, viewed by many as the hawk's hawk, said in 2014: "to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country, "and that the West needed a policy that aimed at reconciliation." He believed adamantly that "Ukraine should not join NATO."

Others who have shared these views include former Australian prime ministers Malcolm Fraser and Paul Keating; former US Defense Secretary Robert Gates; CIA Director William Burns and Pat Buchanan who advised US presidents Nixon, Ford and Reagan. He wrote in 1999 "By moving NATO onto Russia's front porch, we had scheduled a twenty-first century confrontation."

So why didn't those who have enthusiastically pushed for NATO expansion - the George W Bushes, the Tony Blairs, the Jens Stoltenbergs - heeded this accumulated advice? Why indeed! They clearly felt they could continue to prod the Russian bear and get away with it or, having prodded too far, they could live with the consequences even if untold tens of thousands of Russians and, in the event, Ukrainians, would not live with them.

UK uranium in 'help' for Ukraine

Depleted uranium armour piecing shells are to be supplied to Ukraine along with the 14 British Challenger tanks being sent..

Despite MoD claims that risks to personnel and the environment from the DU shells is low their wide use in the Iraq war saw a sharp increase in various cancers in areas where they were used. An increase in other health problems and birth defects were also noted.

OBITUARY Jean Turner

Members of Kingston Peace Council/CND turned out in force to attend the funeral of colleague and activist Jean Turner who died in February, aged 93. Speaking at the funeral service on behalf of KPC Rosemary Addington commented that members couldn't recall when they had first encountered her at the organisation "because she seemed always to have been there". As the funeral service continued those present were to learn just how involved Jean had been in promoting peace and justice throughout her long life.

She was born to working class parents in 1929 in Berkshire where her father worked as a dairy herdsman and the family lived as tenants in tied cottages. Her father's occupation came to an abrupt end when World War Two broke out as the family that owned the estate where he worked closed everything down and fled to the USA. During a rather itinerant period of moving home Jean nevertheless kept up her studies, won a scholarship to a Chertsey grammar school and, following the advice of her teachers, decided to take up architecture as a career.

In 1946, aged just 16, she enrolled in the architecture department at Kingston School of Art and worked on designs for one of the pavilions for the Festival of Britain before moving into local government in 1953 designing mainly council housing. She worked at Surrey County Council and then Epsom and Ewell Borough Council where she became principal architect. In qualifying as a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects she had broken a glass ceiling into a male-dominated profession.

Disgusted

She finally retired from architecture in 1985, disgusted at the policy of the then Thatcher Government selling off council homes she had designed at knock down prices through the Right To Buy.

From an early age she had been reading about and absorbing socialist principles and throughout the war kept a diary on the progress not only of Allied Forces but also the USSR's contribution to the defeat of Nazi Germany. She joined the Labour Party in 1946 but left two years later horrified at the party's foreign policy. In 1951, aged 22, she joined the Communist Party of Great Britain and remained an active member for the rest of her life. Jean joined national CND at its formation in 1958 and became involved with Kingston Peace

Council in the early 80s as the threat of cruise missiles at Greenham Common was looming large. At the time KPC was campaigning, fundraising and supporting the women's peace camp at the base.

In 1982 Jean took part in the international Women's Peace March from Moscow to Vienna representing Kingston Peace Council and taking the organisation's banner with her! (see article on page opposite) Other activities in her busy life included supporting and fundraising for *The Morning Star* newspaper (which she sold every Saturday in Kingston Market Place), being a union member in NALGO, secretary of Kingston Against Racism and Fascism opposing the National Front, and chair of the Miners Support Committee in Kingston during 1984-5. She was also a prolific writer of articles and book reviews and was frequently invited to speak on all manner of topics.

Significant legacy

Another major area of involvement developed at the time that Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet leader in 1985. She applied to become general secretary of the London-based Society of Cultural Relations with the USSR and got the job. She filled this post until 'retirement' in 2013 but carried on in the now renamed Society for Cooperation in Russian and Soviet Studies as honorary secretary and then honorary treasurer until her death.

This involvement led directly to what she considered to be her most significant legacy. She was instrumental in the campaign to create the Soviet War Memorial that, since 1999, has stood in parkland alongside the Imperial War Museum in Kennington. The memorial commemorates the loss of 27 million Russian and Soviet lives - both military and civilian - that made such a huge contribution to the defeat of Nazism by the Allies during the Second World War.

Jean's lifeblood was political activism for peace and justice. Her colleagues in KPC recall her as a remarkable person with the courage to stick to her beliefs and someone who was formidable and well informed on so many issues. Even when her health began to impede her mobility she would still help on the KPC stall in Kingston, supported by a walking stick and latterly in her wheelchair. We will miss her greatly but are so grateful for her massive contribution to the cause of peace. She leaves two daughters and four grandchildren.

When KPC went to Kiev

Probably the only occasion when Kingston Peace Council's banner has travelled abroad came in 1982 when activist Jean Turner took it with her on a multicountry peace mission across eastern Europe.

The international Women's Peace March set off from Stockholm in July, led by Scandinavian peace activists. The first leg took the campaigners to Minsk and thence to Moscow. The second leg, which Jean joined on behalf of KPC, travelled from Moscow to Vienna with some 500 international delegates. Jean travelled with them, first from Moscow to Kiev, then part of the USSR, and then on to Miskolc in Hungary, then Budapest and finally Vienna. The march culminated on Hiroshima Day - August 6 - under the slogans 'No to Nuclear Weapons East or West', 'Yes to Disarmament and Peace' and 'Negotiation Not Confrontation.'

On her return to the UK Jean wrote and spoke widely of her experience and managed to get coverage in the local newspapers. The *Surrey Comet* (see picture, above right) published a supportive piece with an image captioned 'Hungary's Young Pioneers take charge of Kingston Peace Council's banner in Miskolc'. It also noted that a reporter in the picture could be seen interviewing another UK campaigner on the march, Dr Mary Brennan, then secretary of Birmingham branch of the World Disarmament Campaign and a prominent member of national CND.

In the *Comet* article Jean was quoted saying "Everywhere we met with nothing but welcome for our message from young and old." She was described in the article as "a council architect and Communist candidate for Coombe ward in the recent borough elections."

Laughed off

The article went on: "Armed only with Kingston Peace Council's banner her first meeting with Russian peace campaigners was in Kiev where Miss Turner told radio listeners of the peace council's hopes to form a link with Kiev Peace Committee." Another local newspaper, the long since defunct *Kingston Guardian*, scoffed at this idea reporting the words of then Kingston Council Conservative Leader Michael Knowles who "laughed off an idea that Kingston should establish a twin-town link with the Russian (sic) city of Kiev."

"This is the silliest season for politics and this is one of the silliest suggestions I've heard," Councillor Knowles was quoted as saying.



How the Surrey Comet covered the story

Characteristically, Jean did not let Cllr Knowles' comments pass unanswered. In a follow-up edition of the local *Guardian* she had a letter published. "How sad," she wrote, "to read on my return that this experience has been distorted by your journal into a cheap sneer about a 'Red link' between Kingston and Kiev," and she went on, "My mission was to form a link between Kingston Peace Council/CND and Kiev Peace Council, a suggestion that was welcomed in Kiev and hopefully the link will come about.

Cold-war warrior

"Kiev, like Kingston, is a fine, ancient town on a great river. Its history has been blackened by terrible destructive wars and the death of half its population in the last war is not forgotten."

And she rounded on the council's Tory leader: "How can a puny, cold-war warrior like Councillor Knowles understand the desire of a town like Kiev for peace?

"He welcomes nuclear weapons and pretends that civil defence can cope with a nuclear holocaust. Fortunately, there are saner men and women in Kingston than he with whom the people of Kiev would feel totally as one." And a final defiant flourish: "Long live such a Red link!"

The *Surrey Comet's* coverage of Jean's European march ended by noting that nearly 5,000 people had already signed a peace council petition to declare Kingston borough nuclear-free.

As reported in KP News March 2023 edition this actually came to pass for a brief period when Labour held the balance of power in Kingston Council after the 1986 elections.



It was music to our ears

Classical music lovers and peace activists gathered at St. Mary's church, Barnes, in late April for a concert given by five musicians who support Musicians for Peace and Disarmament. They were treated to a varied programme that included quintets by Beethoven and Mozart, plus various combinations of instruments: piano and horn playing Poulenc's Elégie, oboe, clarinet and bassoon for Milhaud's Suite d'apres Corrette, Debussy's Première Rhapsodie for clarinet and piano, and Ravel's Menuet Antique for piano.

The picture shows, seated left to right, Christopher O'Neal, Philip Gibbon, Julian Jacobson, Tony Lamb and Julian Faultless.

The next MPD concert, on Thursday May 25 (see diary dates on P8) will be in the organisation's traditional venue, St James's Church, Piccadilly, and marks their first return to the building in four years following the disruption caused by the pandemic. This will be a full orchestral event with conductor Jane Glover and flautist Wissam Boustany. The programme will feature works by Prokofiev, Mozart and Haydn and is being held in memory of the late Bruce Kent. The concert is jointly promoted by MPD, CND, MAW and Pax Christi.

Blix: Bush and Blair should be indicted for war crimes

Former UN Weapons Inspector Hans Blix has called for George W Bush and Tony Blair to be indicted for war crimes. Blix, a former Swedish politician who led a UN-appointed team of inspectors to detect Saddam Hussein's non-existent weapons of mass destruction in the run-up to the Iraq War, was speaking to journalist Mehdi Hassan about the arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court against Vladimir Putin for war crimes in the Ukraine War. The indictment was issued in the same week as the 20th anniversary of the Iraq War.

Blix said that Putin, in a speech justifying Russia's invasion of Ukraine, cited the US-led invasion of Iraq and the sham intelligence at the time on the existence of Hussein's alleged WMDs as a pretext. Blix, whose inspectors had been prevented by Bush and Blair from completing their inspections, told the journalist that Putin's comments were self-serving but he asked, why should not Bush and Blair be indicted for war crimes because of a war that violated international law and killed very many innocent people.

Israel court protests no help to Palestinians

The recent upsurge of serious violence between Israelis and Palestinians following an Israeli raid on worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque - the third holiest site in Islam - has broken out while Israeli society is convulsed with the biggest public demonstrations against the government that the country has ever witnessed.

But it's as though the two events are occurring in different universes. The dichotomy was set out in a recent article on the website *Foreign Policy* by Palestinian writer Yousef Munayyer, a senior fellow at the Arab Center in Washington DC.

The article 'Why Palestinians Aren't Joining Israel's Protests' began "A state that considers equality an existential threat can never be a democracy."

He argues that in most societies vulnerable minorities are the biggest proponents of strong and independent courts as it is the judiciary that so often shields these minorities from the excesses of government. Israeli citizens have taken to the streets in their thousands to protest Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu"s plans to limit the Israeli Supreme Court's ability to challenge government actions. The demonstrators have said they are out to protect the court from political interference and save Israeli democracy. But Palestinians have not joined them in this protest.

This, writes Munayyer, is because, to Palestinian citizens of Israel "the court is the core of a system that upholds Jewish supremacy—and thus is an obstacle to their political equality."

While Israelis were on the streets on March 30 protesting Netanyahu's plans Palestinians marked Land Day which commemorates the massacre of Palestinian citizens on this date in 1976 who were protesting against the appropriation of their land by the Israeli military. During the Land Day March in 2018 that initiated the Great March of Return the Israeli military forces opened fire killing more than 200 Palestinians and injured thousands more.

Writes Munayyer in his article: "The very Supreme Court that Jews are protesting to save has been the state's most loyal partner in enabling this sort of violent repression." The court approved the military's use of live ammunition against protesters in Gaza in 2018 and has never denied a request by Israel to hold Palestinians without trial or charge. It has allowed the confiscation of Palestinian property in East Jerusalem and revoked the citizenship of those deemed disloyal.

The article ends: "for Palestinians, protesting the Israeli government can be a death sentence - whether they are citizens of Israel or not. They certainly aren't interested in putting their lives on the line to save the very court that allows the state to kill them."

OBITUARY Maisie Carter

Maisie Carter, who has died at the age of 96, was born in Bermondsey in 1927. She became a tireless campaigner for social justice and peace all her life and was involved in many organisations including the Communist Party, the Labour Party, the NUT, Merton and Sutton Trades Council, Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, and CND. Maisie taught for years at The Priory C of E School, Wimbledon.

Maisie, with Joanna Bazley, was a founder member of Wimbledon Disarmament Coalition/CND (WDC) in the 1980s during the Cruise missile crisis. She was involved in all the activities of the group and was a longstanding member of the committee, serving for many years as chair.

She and Joanna were very much the driving force behind the annual fund-raising event, the Fete of the Earth. She was often to be found selling raffle tickets or latterly behind the stall selling CND merchandise often supported by her daughter-in-law, Melody. After she was no longer able to attend the Sidmouth Folk Festival, where she had been instrumental in setting up an annual Hiroshima Day commemoration, she joined the WDC annual gathering by Rushmere Pond on 6th August, and, with great effort and help from friends, was there in August 2022. She attended the weekly Vigil for Peace outside Wimbledon Library handing out leaflets and engaging with passersby, from its inception after 9/11 in 2001 until the pandemic finally brought it to an end in 2020. She was also to be found each month on the Peace Table. Although in the last few years she was dogged by ill-health, she would still turn out for leafletting or the Peace Table, often looking rather fragile, but this was deceptive: she could still vigorously engage members of the public in discussion and stand up powerfully for the ideals in which she believed. Her contribution to the local peace movement was immense and her influence was felt far beyond Wimbledon. Maisie was a wonderful person and will be much missed.

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KINGSTON PEACE COUNCIL/CND

Subscription rates £8 annually, £10 family membership, £3 unwaged

CHAIRPERSON and SECRETARY Positions vacant

Please offer if you could help as secretary. At present several people are sharing these jobs.

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Disclaimer: The views expressed in this edition are not necessarily those of Kingston Peace Council/CND

Our regular stall in Kingston Market Place is

held on the first and third Saturday of each month. The first May stall was cancelled because it clashed with the Coronation. The May 20th stall will take place and we are appealing for those not planning to protest at RAF Lakenheath on that day (see diary dates) to offer help on the stall. If you can help please contact Angie Cooper on 0208 399 5537 or angecooper47@hotmail.com

Dates for your Diary

May-June 2023

Saturday 13th May

NAKBA 75 national march, marking the NAKBA not just as a historical event but a continuing process of oppression. 12 noon. Assemble Portland Place W1A, march to Whitehall. Organised by PSC, supported by CND, Stop the War Coalition, Palestinian Forum in Britain, Friends of Al-Aqsa, and Muslim Association of Britain. www.palestinecampaign.org

Monday 15th May

International Conscientious Objectors Day central London event. 1pm. Tavistock Square, Bloomsbury. Speakers include Belarusian peace activist Olga Karach, Semih Sapmaz from war Resisters' International, Feminist historian Ali Ronan and actor and playwright Michael Mears. Ceremony also live on Zoom. Visit www.ppu.org.uk on the day.

Saturday 20th May

Protest at RAF Lakenheath against the return of US nuclear weapons to British soil. CND is organising workshops, 'artivism', performances and speeches (including from campaigners from other European bases hosting US nuclear weapons), and food will be available. Coaches are being arranged from London to Lakenheath - tickets are £10(Unwaged/Low-waged), £22(Standard) or £30(Solidarity). See eventbrite.co.uk/e/557743835827 If you plan to travel to Lakenheath please let Rosemary know on 020 8399 2547 or Rosemaryadd@aol.com

Thursday 25th May

Spring Orchestral Concert for Peace in Memory of Bruce Kent. Musicians for Peace and Disarmament Chamber Orchestra. Conducted by Jane Glover DBE with soloist Wissam Boustany. Programme includes Prokofiev Symphony No. 1, Mozart Flute Concerto in D, Haydn Symphony No. 103. 7.30pm. St James's Church, Piccadilly. Tickets £20 at the door or online via www.mpdconcerts.org

Friday 2nd/Saturday 3rd June

40th anniversary of the four-day Peace Blockade at USAF Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire. National CND is organising events on both days to mark the blockade of the base where six F-111 fighter bombers armed with nuclear weapons were stationed on permanent standby. In 1983 more than 5,000 people took part of which 752 were arrested. The airbase has since been mothballed. On June 2nd 12 noon walk the perimeter of the fence. On June 3rd 10.30am a reunion and meeting on the site of the old peace camp. Details contact: SteveBarwickPC@outlook.com

Saturday 10th June

Ham Fair. KPC/CND will be taking its usual stall at the annual fair on Ham Common. Help is needed to transport items for sale, set up and take down and also to run the stall during the day. The fair is open to the public from 11am to 4.30pm. Please let Maggie know if you can help. Tel: 0208 549 0086, 07770 558547, margaret@galdor.co.uk

Saturday 17th June

38th annual Celebration of the London Peace Pagoda. 2pm. Battersea Park SW11 4NJ. Contact: 0208 871 7530. www.londonpeacepagoda.wordpress.com

Saturday 24th June

Resist Armed Forces Day. Action Against Everyday Militarism. Peace Pledge Union co-ordinating events around UK. Details to be confirmed in due course. Check www.ppu.org.uk/events