

Nika riots begin in Constantinople, revolt against Emperor Justinian I, prompted by chariot racing

John Walter publishes 1st issue of "The Times" of London



Adolf Hitler declares "Total War" against the Allies

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates steps aside as chief executive and promotes company president Steve Ballmer to the position

He says fighting to hold Soledar

held out in corpse-strewn battlefield of Soledar as Russian mercenaries claim to have captured the mining town



Ukrainian soldiers watch as smoke billows during fighting between Ukrainian and Russian forces in Soledar

said in an online broadcast.

Ukraine has acknowledged Russian advances but Deputy Defence Minister Hanna Malyar told a briefing yesterday that fighting was still fierce.

The Russians were "moving over their own corpses", she said. Reuters was unable to independently verify the situation.

Malyar said Russia had increased the number of units in Ukraine to 280 from 250 in the past week as it seeks to regain the

initiative.

Kremlin-watchers were poring over Russia's latest switch of battlefield leadership, a day after Valery Gerasimov, chief of the military's general staff, was unexpectedly given direct command of the invasion.

The previous commander of three months' standing, Army General Sergei Surovikin, was effectively demoted to become one of Gerasimov's three deputies.

Moscow explained the deci-

YOU KNOW WHAT

Soledar would be Moscow's biggest gain since a series of humiliating retreats in the second half of 2022 - but at immense cost, with huge losses on both sides

sion - at least the third abrupt change of top commander in the 11-month conflict - as a response to the campaign's growing importance.

Russian and Western commentators alike saw attempts to shift blame for setbacks in which Russia has lost around 40% of the territory it had seized since February.

Fixer or fall-guy?

Gerasimov had become a target of abuse from nationalist bloggers, who have flourished even

as the Kremlin has shut all independent media and jailed critics of the war.

"The move is likely to be greeted with extreme displeasure by much of the Russian ultra-nationalist and military blogger community, who have increasingly blamed Gerasimov for the poor execution of the war," Britain's Ministry of Defence said.

One prominent Russian military blogger who posts on the Telegram messaging app under the name of Rybar said Surovikin was being made a scapegoat for military debacles.

However, Mick Ryan, a retired Australian major general, suggested in a tweet that Putin and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu had "set up Gerasimov as the fall guy for all of Russia's failures".

Semyon Pegov, another Russian military blogger, noted that "now the General Staff is directly and uncompromisingly responsible for absolutely everything".

Ukraine's defence ministry offered mockery. "Every Russian general must receive at least one opportunity to fail in Ukraine," it tweeted. "Some may be lucky enough to fail twice."

Soledar would be Moscow's

biggest gain since a series of humiliating retreats in the second half of 2022 - but at immense cost, with huge losses on both sides.

It had barely 10,000 inhabitants before the war. Russia has failed in repeated attempts to capture the far more important nearby city of Bakhmut, ten times as large.

Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko told Ukrainian state TV that 559 civilians remained in Soledar, including 15 children, and could not be evacuated.

Across Ukraine, the front lines have barely budged since Russia's last big retreat in the south two months ago. Kyiv hopes heavy armour from Western allies will allow it to resume advances.

With the West upping the ante in a way that seemed unthinkable a few months ago, the United States, Germany and France last week pledged armoured fighting vehicles - and the focus has now shifted to main battle tanks.

Polish President Andrzej Duda, who was cheered in the Ukrainian city of Lviv on Wednesday, promised a company of 14 German-made Leopard battle tanks, part of what he called an international coalition.

out at press over killings in book



Harry's autobiography 'Spare' at

Police clear first buildings in abandoned German coal village

Reuters | Luetzerath

German police were trying to clear hundreds of climate protesters holed up in an abandoned village in western Germany for a second day yesterday, in a continuing standoff over the expansion of a coal mine.

For over two years demonstrators have occupied Luetzerath, a village in the brown-coal district of the western state of North Rhine-Westphalia, to stop the expansion of the Garzweiler lignite coal mine, run by energy firm RWE.

Following a court decision allowing RWE to proceed with the expansion, hundreds of police in riot gear moved in on Wednesday morning, clearing barricades erected by



Police officers use shields as activists demonstrate during a sit-in protest the activists.

But progress has been slow; two people have been detained and three more were

in custody since the operation started on Wednesday, according to Aachen police spokesperson Andrew Mueller said.

Activists said hundreds of protesters were still at the site.

Equipped with ladders on rainy yesterday morning, police climbed the walls of one of the abandoned houses in the village as protesters in the building and on its roof chanted "People got the power" and "Luetzerath stays".

Protesters have formed human chains, staged sit-ins and occupied deserted buildings which will be razed to make way for the mine's expansion. Some have dug themselves into holes in the ground while others hung suspended from wooden tripods.

Benedict's confidant spills beans on two-popes tension

AFF | Vatican City

Just one week after the funeral of Benedict XVI, his closest aide released a much-trailed memoir yesterday, revealing details of tensions between the late pope emeritus and his more liberal successor Pope Francis.

Georg Gaenswein's book reveals private conversations with both popes in charting the German ex-pontiff's rise to power and the decade spent in retirement following his shock resignation in 2013.

The Vatican has not officially responded but Pope Francis called Gaenswein in to a private meeting on Monday, following days of pre-publication interviews in which the 66-year-old German aired years of grievances.

In one, he claimed it had "pained Benedict's heart" when Francis effectively reversed his predecessor's decision to relax restrictions on the use of the traditional Latin mass.



Pope Francis meets Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI as Archbishop Georg Gaenswein looks on (file photo)

Up until his death on December 31 at the age of 95, Benedict had remained a figurehead for the conservative wing of the Catholic Church, which views Pope Francis as too liberal.

Shocked and speechless

As his secretary since 2003, Gaenswein was a constant presence at Benedict's side, and during his final years living

in a monastery in the Vatican grounds, his gatekeeper.

After Benedict's death, Gaenswein led the mourners, greeting visitors to his mentor's lying-in-state and kissing the coffin in front of tens of thousands at St Peter's Square during the funeral led by Pope Francis.

In "Nothing But the Truth: My Life Beside Pope Benedict XVI", Gaenswein describes

YOU KNOW WHAT

As his secretary since 2003, Gaenswein was a constant presence at Benedict's side, and during his final years living in a monastery in the Vatican grounds, his gatekeeper

Benedict's perplexity at some of Francis's decisions, and the latter's apparent attempts to keep his predecessor in check.

After becoming in 2013 the first pope in six centuries to resign, Benedict promised to live "hidden from the world", but broke that pledge to speak out on several explosive issues.

“I made a choice to share it because having spent nearly two decades working with veterans all around the world, I think the most important thing is to be honest and be able to give space to others to be able to share their experiences without any shame”

PRINCE HARRY

veterans.

"Without doubt the most dangerous lie that they have told is that I somehow boasted about the number of people that I killed in Afghanistan," he said.

"I made a choice to share it because having spent nearly two decades working with veterans all around the world, I think the most important thing is to be honest and be able to give space to others to be able to share their experiences without any shame."



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



13 years ago, a devastating earthquake claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in Haiti, including 102 members of the @UN family. They will never be forgotten.

@antoniogetterres

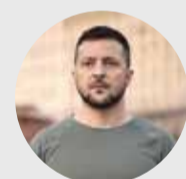
02



3 years ago, the first SARS-CoV-2 sequence was shared. Today, sequencing remains vital. We urge all countries to keep testing & sharing sequences. We understand efforts won't be as intense as before but we can't beat this virus with our eyes closed.

@DrTedros

03



Discussed current security challenges with President of Cyprus @AnastasiadesCY. Thanked for humanitarian aid for Ukraine and willingness to support the increase in sanction pressure on the aggressor country.

@ZelenskyyUa

04



For the sixth month in a row, yearly inflation is down. It might be rising in economies around the world, but it's coming down here. And gas prices, food, and more are following. That adds up to a break for families and proof that my plan is working.

@POTUS

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)