

Meltdown in the Oval Office!

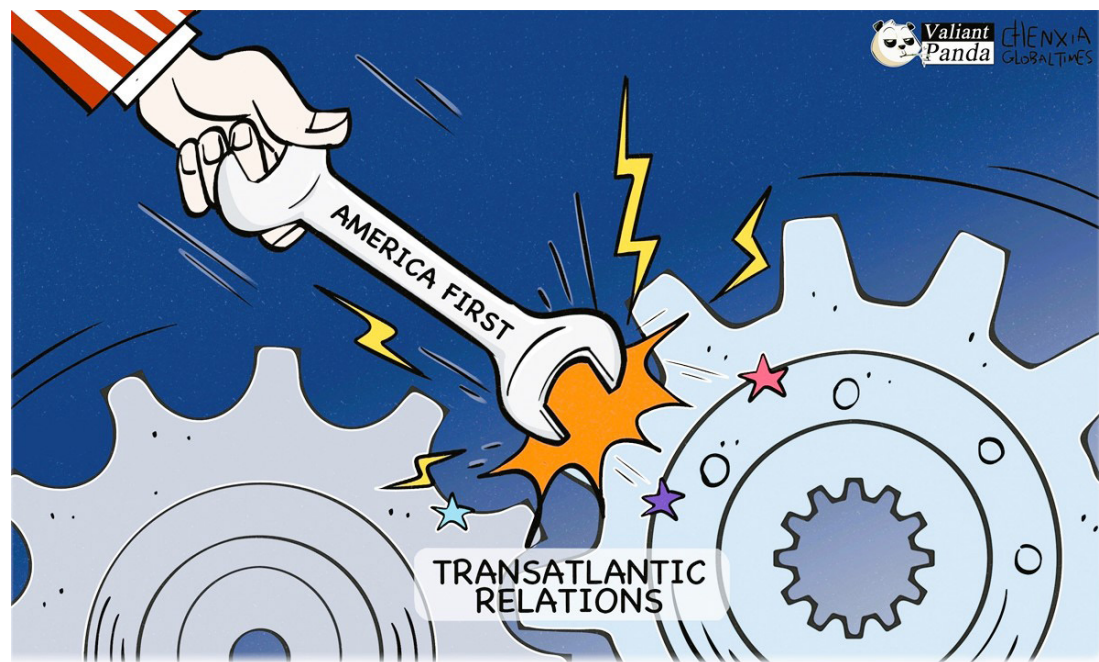
by our Eastern European
Affairs correspondent

European leaders are set to meet in London to prop up the Zelensky regime and prolong the proxy war against Russia following the collapse of talks between the Americans and Ukraine in Washington this week.

US imperialism broke with the leader of the Kiev regime during a public row between Donald Trump and Vladimir Zelensky in the White House that ended with the Ukrainian leader being shown the door. Although it began with pleasantries the meeting quickly dissolved into an openly hostile confrontation during which Trump accused Zelensky of ungratefulness and unwillingness to negotiate an end to the Ukraine conflict.

Trump later said on social media that Zelensky had been “disrespectful”. He wrote: “I have determined that President Zelensky is not ready for Peace if America is involved, because he feels our involvement gives him a big advantage in negotiations. I don’t want advantage, I want PEACE. He can come back when he is ready for peace.”

The American-Russian dialogue will continue but whether Zelensky will be part of it remains to be seen. Trump’s aide,



the billionaire tech-tycoon Elon Musk, thinks not. “Zelensky [a former Ukrainian TV comic] has been fired from his acting job” Musk quipped in a post on his X social media platform.

Zelensky was kicked out of the White House after a stormy televised end to their talks in which Trump told Zelensky he “didn’t have the cards” to win the war without the United States. He told Zelensky he was “gambling with World War III” and warned him that “you either make a deal, or we’re out”.

The meeting between Zelensky and Trump closed without signing an agreement granting the Americans rights to the country’s natural resources or holding the planned joint press conference.

Earlier Trump had held talks with Starmer and the French president in Washington on Ukraine. Although the Americans sided with People’s China and Russia at the UN Security Council over Ukraine last week, the Trump team still talk about a

standstill ceasefire while Britain and France want a European “peace-keeping” force to guarantee a future settlement that would be backed up by a significant American military “backdrop”. Trump, for his part, seems amenable to some sort of NATO presence in Ukraine – but only to safeguard the investments of American mining corporations that hope to exploit the country when the shooting stops.

But Russia rejects Western calls to freeze the frontline in Ukraine at its current position and police it with European “peace-keeping” troops. In the Gulf city of Doha Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that any course of action involving the deployment of European peacekeepers to Ukraine is out of the question and what remains of Ukraine after the conflict ends “must be freed from racist laws”.

“No, we cannot consider any such options,” Lavrov told reporters after talks with the Qatari leaders. The French and British proposals are aimed at

further fuelling the conflict and “pumping Kiev with weapons again” he said.

Russia is not blocking negotiations on Ukraine Lavrov said, stressing that the best way to resolve the conflict is to understand

its root causes. “We are waiting for our European colleagues to stop spreading lies that Russia is blocking the negotiations. Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly responded to these false claims, pointing out that the Ukrainian leadership, instigated by Europe, refuses to negotiate.”

Lavrov noted that some Western European politicians believe the conflict in Ukraine should be resolved through military means rather than through negotiations. But “we believe that the best help from those who sincerely want to help resolve the conflict is to understand its root causes, as President Trump did recently”.

This week began with a new wave of Russian rocket and drone attacks on targets right across Ukraine. Russian forces continue to advance as the Ukrainian defence crumbles under relentless rocket and artillery fire. So, for now, the war goes on -- with or without the help of the Americans...

FUND

This week’s post-bag brought in £371 thanks in part to a Chigwell supporter who gave us £130, a Dagenham comrade who sent in £31 and the other comrades who raised £18 at a meeting of the Metropolitan Supporters Group at the Party Centre last weekend. The fighting fund for the month now stands at £3,204. We need £300 to push us over our £3,500 target for February and we’ve one more campaigning weekend to do it!

While the dregs of society who pose as leftists call for nukes for Ukraine the warmongers in Britain, Europe and the United States are working night and day to sabotage the efforts to end the fighting.

That’s why solidarity with the people of the Donbas and the anti-fascist resistance in Ukraine must go on. It’s part of the anti-war struggle that has closed ranks with the anti-imperialist movements to build the biggest Palestinian solidarity campaign in Western Europe. We are part of that struggle – and we do our best to get the communist voice heard on the street and in the offices, factories and estates of our country.

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

To save a stamp you can also use your credit or debit card to send contributions here: <http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

The cowardly, craven BBC

Hundreds of film, TV and media professionals have condemned censorship and racism after the BBC removed a documentary about the children of Gaza. In a letter to BBC executives, they criticised the decision as “racist” and “dehumanising”, blaming pressure from pro-Israel groups. Billed as “following the lives of four young people trying to survive the Israel-Hamas war as they hope for a ceasefire – a vivid and unflinching view of life in a warzone”, the documentary has now been pulled by the BBC.

Gary Lineker and Miriam Margolyes are among more than 800 media figures who have condemned the BBC’s decision to pull a documentary about children’s lives in Gaza.

The BBC says it removed *Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone* from iPlayer while it carried out “further due diligence” after discovering that the young narrator was the son of a Hamas official. Zionists, including the Israeli ambassador Tzipi Hotovely, had written to the BBC asking how a child with alleged family ties to Hamas was allowed to be the focus of a documentary about the lives of ordinary Palestinians.

The open protest letter published by Artists for Palestine UK criticised what the signatories said was a “racist” and “dehumanising” campaign targeting the documentary. It called on the BBC to reject efforts to have the film permanently removed or “subjected to undue disavowals” saying that surrendering to efforts to stop its return to iPlayer would indicate “racialised smears against Palestinians outweigh journalistic ethics and public interest”.

The signatories also warned against intrusive scrutiny of Abdullah Al-Yazouri, a 14-year-old child who narrated *Gaza: How to Survive a War Zone*. His father, Dr Ayman Al-Yazouri, served as Gaza’s deputy agriculture minister – a civil service role concerned with food production.

“Almost half of Gaza’s population are children. What they have experienced over the past 17 months is something no child deserves to ever go through” said Liam O’Hare, an award-winning documentary producer/director who signed the letter. “As journalists and filmmakers we have a duty to help tell their story and that’s what this film did so brilliantly. The BBC cannot allow a politicised campaign to succeed in silencing the children of Gaza.”

Artists for Palestine UK (APUK) is a growing network of artists and cultural workers standing together in support of Palestinian liberation and for a just resolution for all in Israel/Palestine, including Palestinian refugees.

The campaign that was launched in 2015 believes that those who work in the arts have a responsibility to consider the impact of their work when engaging in a situation of radical inequality.

APUK says that the arts are of particular significance where a people’s history, cultural heritage and future are under constant threat of erasure, and it believes that the arts have an important role to play in connecting audiences with Palestinian experience. It opposes all forms of racism, including anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism.

“The UK film and TV industry will no longer be intimidated by those whose sole mission it is to censor the voices of the many who are defending the rights of children, the marginalised and those in desperate need. All stories have the right to be told and journalistic scrutiny should not be at the whim of those who deem certain lives unequal,” said letter signatory Nada Issa, an award-winning producer/director and journalist who is part Palestinian and Lebanese. We whole-heartedly agree!

A risky business

by Betsey Piette

A key question behind the havoc Donald Trump and Elon Musk are creating through their Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) is, are the majority of the US ruling class on board?

In recent days, as Musk and his band of young technocrats rampage their way through federal departments, it appears they have no problem putting some key departments at risk through massive lay-offs. One is the Treasury Department, which backs up the entire American banking system, serving as the last resort to the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in a banking crisis to insure nationwide bank deposits.

Another sweeping round of lay-offs took place at the Department of Energy, impacting over 300 workers from the National Nuclear Security Administration who oversee massive US nuclear stockpiles. CNN reported that government officials responsible for the cuts appeared unaware of the crucial roles played by these laid-off workers.

Is the crisis for the US capitalist system so great that not just a few super-billionaires but the entire American ruling class is willing to risk it all?

Major capitalist media – the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, CNN and others – all put forth a similar analysis of the Trump/Musk coup, but none question why now, and what is happening with US capitalism to make it willing to take these risks.

Corporate media all report that in less than three weeks, Musk’s DOGE has followed the same playbook at one federal agency after another: “Install loyalists in leadership. Hoover up internal data, including the sensitive and the classified. Gain control of the flow of funds. And push hard – by means legal or otherwise – to eliminate jobs and programs not ideologically aligned with Trump administration goals” (*Washington Post*).

Very few government voices from either capitalist party seem to have the courage to question what is going on.

Washington’s bureaucracy

consists of agencies that administer services such as Social Security, Education, Health & Human Services, the Veterans Administration (VA); bodies that regulate the economy including the Treasury Department; and the state apparatus – the FBI, CIA and other spy agencies, the Pentagon, USAID and the State Department.

There have been thousands of lay-offs across the federal government system impacting the Treasury Department, the Office of Personnel Management, the Internal Revenue Service, Homeland Security, the VA, the National Institutes of Health, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Education and more. Musk’s goal is to run federal agencies on a for-profit basis.

The end game is to slash the federal government to levels not seen in over 20 years, diminish regulations over private businesses, reduce services, attack workers’ rights and curtail attempts to prevent capitalists’ destruction of the environment. By introducing greater technology and artificial intelligence, Musk’s DOGE plans to replace the human workforce in the federal government with machines and destroy unions in the process.

While Musk and Trump claim that DOGE staff are seeking to “identify fraud and waste”, so far they haven’t targeted the Pentagon, the federal agency most notorious for fraud and waste.

Throughout the history of capitalism, companies have developed technology so that machines replace human labour in order to maximise profits. Marx described this process in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848): “The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. ... Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguishes the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones.”

AI was developed through intense exploitation of millions

of workers on a global scale. The latest technological innovation is now being used by the capitalist class at a time of extreme crisis to totally restructure a governing apparatus in existence for over two centuries.

While the bourgeois media focus on Musk and DOGE, they ignore the underlying cause of the crisis, which is the irreversible decline of US imperialism and the rise of socialist China. This crisis makes it impossible for the American ruling class to govern in the old way.

The crisis is so severe that the billionaires have appointed themselves to positions of government power. They no longer trust the traditional party leaders – the representatives and senators they bought and paid for – to get what they want from their capitalist government.

The billionaire class wants even more tax breaks, but restrictions Congress historically placed on the debt ceiling currently stand in the way. The federal budget deficit is \$2 trillion annually, with a national debt approaching \$37 trillion. Stripping funding from social programmes would pay for huge tax breaks for the super-rich while remaining under the debt ceiling.

And the super-rich want aggressive imperialist policies that undermine other capitalist countries as well as increased threats against countries trying to build socialism, such as China.

Corporate media’s focus on Trump and Musk serves to hide the dictatorship of the billionaire class – especially the control that they have over the government and their plans to eliminate any government regulations that get in the way of maximising profits.

Membership in federal workers’ unions has greatly escalated in recent weeks. Demonstrations are taking place around the USA and more are planned. The only power that can stop the dictatorship by the billionaires is the massive power of the global working class, which is slowly awakening to its task ahead.

Workers World
(USA)

Workers' Notes

Starmer stiffens aid for guns

by New Worker correspondent

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer says he's going to increase military spending and it's going to be funded by cuts in the foreign aid budget. Announcing the "biggest sustained increase in defence spending since the end of the Cold War" Starmer said the arms budget is to rise to 2.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) within two years, an increase of more than £13 billion per year from the present figure of 2.3 per cent, and remain at that level until the end of this parliament. The Labour government will then aim to spend a full three per cent of GDP on war in the next parliament, a further rise of more than £30 billion per year.

The plan, announced in Parliament on the eve of Starmer's talks with Donald Trump in Washington, is clearly an attempt to appease the Americans who want all their NATO allies to up their defence expenditure to boost US arms exports and to enable the Americans to cut costs by reducing their own military presence in Europe. But it's provoked an angry response from the left and the anti-war movement as yet another broken promise.

Labour's 2024 election manifesto said the party was "committed to restoring development spending at the level of 0.7 per cent of gross national income as soon as fiscal circumstances allow" – a pledge the Government will now find well-nigh impossible to fulfil.

"The government has announced it will pay for more weapons and bombs by cutting support for the world's poorest people. A deplorable decision that will only create a more unstable and unequal world.

by New Worker correspondent

London comrades joined other activists from the International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity movement who were out and about in Brixton last weekend.

And they received an extremely positive and friendly response from local people in the south London borough – a working-class area with high levels of unemployment and

What is the government doing to bring about peace?" was how Jeremy Corbyn put it. The former Labour leader who now heads the Independent Alliance in the House of Commons said that "since Labour took office, 10,000 more children have been plunged into poverty by the refusal to scrap the two-child benefit cap. Increasing military spending while millions of children go hungry is not a tough decision. It's the wrong decision."

Lyndsey German, the convenor of the Stop the War movement, said the defence hike "will take the money from overseas development budgets, consigning some of the poorest people in the world to become even poorer. But no worry – Britain will develop more arms and more weapons to facilitate the increasing wars taking place throughout the world.

"There is something grotesquely awful about a Labour government denying the WASPI women around £10 billion in one off compensation but then immediately committing to £13 billion a year for this increased spending. Starmer lauded the previous generations who have fought in wars but is prepared for them to be cold and hungry to promote his imperial ambitions.

"This decision will make the threat of war more likely. It will tie the ailing British economy even more to military production (and indeed to US arms companies) with the consequent threats to public spending in other areas. The

Stop the proxy war against Russia!

poverty – at their picket on Saturday.

Many people showed their support and had discussions with the protesters.

These are some of the comments we had from the local people: "Why are we giving all that money to that guy in Ukraine (Zelensky)? He's got houses all over the world... We need that money for ordinary people here!... Fuck NATO! They are killing the whole world!" and "Spend money on people here, not on Ukraine,



Look around you, you can see the devastation here!"

claim that it will help British jobs is one that no one should be fooled by. Any big increase in spending – on housing and health for example – would have the same effect. Many of the jobs in 'defence' are in the US and elsewhere. As number of studies have shown, defence expenditure is one of the least efficient ways of creating jobs.

"The unions who welcome this are deluding themselves: it will do little for their members in those industries and will worsen the social security of housing, health and education that millions of workers in this country desperately need."

Sophie Bolt, the new general secretary of CND, said much the same. "These increases are to fund a reckless war drive that risks plunging Europe into decades-long confrontation with Russia, whilst ratcheting up nuclear tensions globally... whilst it is presented as defending Ukraine, this NATO war drive is global. We know that Trump's 'America First' policies are still about maintaining US dominance over the rest of the world. From calls to seize Greenland, Canada and Panama, to ethnically cleanse Palestinians from Gaza, Trump has no respect for sovereignty, human rights and international law. His plans to expand the US Missile Defence System, or 'the Iron Dome for America', would enable the Trump administration to use its nuclear weapons without fear of a retaliatory strike. British bases

already play a central role in this 'Iron Dome for America', making us a target in any global confrontation, yet offering no protection. This is a very chilling prospect.

"Instead of vying for Trump's approval over which NATO state can increase its military spending highest, Britain and Europe should instead be using this opportunity to reshape the region's security approach, towards one that is genuinely sustainable and secure. This means Britain ending its military and nuclear alliance with the US. A first step in this would be to scrap the replacement of Britain's nuclear weapons system. With the government's own watchdog concluding that the replacement is 'unachievable', Rachel Reeves should cut her losses and direct the hundreds of billions into rebuilding crumbling public services and investing in sustainable energy sources."

This factory kills kids!

by New Worker correspondent

Six people have been arrested after Palestine Action campaigners climbed onto the gatehouse of an Israeli arms factory in Newcastle and blocked the entrance to the plant. The protest began last week when a specially-adapted vehicle was used to block the entrance

to the weapons plant, with an activist locked on inside the secured vehicle. Others climbed on top of the security box and plastered the premises in red paint to signify the blood of the Palestinians murdered by the weapons made by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems.

Rafael, Israel's third biggest weapons firm, is owned directly by the Zionist state. At the time they acquired Pearson Engineering and Armstrong Works, in September 2022, it was described as a vital part of the "strategic expansion" of Israel's weapons manufacturing capabilities, as well as a way of trying to get round any future arms embargoes. The site specialises in producing armoured military vehicles and tanks, including armoured bulldozers and 'Robotic Combat Vehicles'. Rafael, the parent company, manufacture a range of weapons, advertised as "extensively battle proven by the Israeli Air Force", including guided Spike missiles, which have slaughtered thousands of Palestinians. Labour Lord, John Hutton, is amongst the directors of the Israeli state-owned weapons factory.

In September 2023, Rafael announced that Armstrong Works would be playing a significant role in delivering the Samson 30mm Remote Weapons Station. These remotely-controlled "High Lethality" death-factories include an arsenal of long-range weaponry, such as high-calibre machine-guns, 30mm cannon,

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40mm grenade launchers, and Spike missiles. As well as being used on vehicles, they are used around the perimeters of besieged Gaza, and recently in southern Lebanon, allowing the Israeli military to kill from afar.

In May 2023, to mark the 75th anniversary of the Palestinian Nakba, Palestine Action occupied the roof of the Rafael factory, shutting it down for two days, and causing £69,000 in damage to the weapons site, plus £600,000 in losses, while no weapons were being produced. Since then, there have been regular protests outside the factory gates by local pro-Palestine activists, some of which the police have attacked violently, with arrests being made.

Last week's action marks the start of an escalation of the direct-action campaign against the Israeli weapons maker, and they can expect to be increasingly targeted to disrupt the manufacture of Israeli weapons. It takes place at a time when, despite the ceasefire, Israel continues to murder Palestinians, both in Gaza and the West Bank, to take hostages and imprison them without trial, and to destroy homes on the West Bank, and whole towns and villages in Lebanon.

A spokesperson for Palestine Action said: "The Israeli government owning a weapons factory in Newcastle is a



stain on the whole city. The Israeli death machine has to be stopped, and with the British government entirely complicit in the genocide, it is up to ordinary people to do their part to halt the manufacture of Israeli weapons here. We put Rafael on notice, that we will shut them down at every opportunity. Each hour of production lost means less lives taken."

RMT launches apprentices' charter

by New Worker correspondent

The RMT Young Members

Conference in Canterbury launched the union's Apprentice Charter last week, a ground-breaking initiative aimed at improving wages, working conditions and training standards for transport apprentices across the UK.

With over 50,000 rail workers set to retire in the next five years, the Charter lays out bold demands to ensure apprenticeships are no longer treated as low-paid, insecure and substandard roles, but as a respected and vital investment in the future of the transport industry.

Speaking ahead of the launch, RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch said: "Ap-

prenticeships should be a gateway to highly skilled, secure jobs, but instead, too many young workers are trapped in low pay, poor training, and dead-end contracts.

"Our Apprentice Charter sets out a clear plan to fix this broken system, with better pay, guaranteed jobs, and high-quality, in-house training.

"The government and employers must step up and invest in the next generation of transport workers to help grow the economy and provide secure skilled employment for the long term."

Key demands of the Charter include:

- Fair Pay & Condi-

tions – Apprentices must be paid above the National Living Wage and covered by national collective bargaining agreements.

- Secure Jobs – An end to fixed-term contracts and a guarantee of permanent employment for apprentices who complete training.

- High-Quality Training – Apprenticeships must be brought back in-house, ending low-quality outsourced training.

- More Skilled Apprenticeships – At least 5,000 new railway apprentices per year are needed to fill the UK's transport skills gap.

- Government Action – A fully funded national apprenticeship strategy must be introduced under Great British Railways (GBR) to ensure apprentices receive proper training and career progression opportunities.

RMT Senior Assistant General Secretary Eddie Dempsey and national officer responsible for young members said: "We cannot allow apprentices to be treated as disposable, low-paid labour by unscrupulous employers. The RMT Apprentice Charter is a demand for respect, proper wages, and the quality training that young workers deserve. The industry is at a tipping point – either we invest in the next generation now, or we face a catastrophic skills shortage in the years ahead on the railway."

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

25th February 2005

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has accused the White House of planning new aggressions against his democratically elected government. During his weekly TV programme *Aló Presidente*, the Venezuelan leader said that: "The US government has crashed in Venezuela and will continue to crash as many times as they want" – in reference to past failed attempts by Washington to remove him from power.

Chávez said that evidence points to US involvement

in the April 2002 coup and that the White House has financed opposition groups in Venezuela through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Last August twice-elected Chávez won a referendum on his presidency, which was largely organised by groups who receive funding from the US Government.

During his weekly radio and TV programme, Hugo Chávez said that the US government is considering his assassination as one of the options to get rid of him. He said: "They know they cannot stage a coup d'état. They know that there is no Pinochet here because we have generals, commanders and soldiers who are patriots, and who will not get down on their knees before the US empire. They know that there is a people with conscience who they will not be able to confuse through the media they control."

The Venezuelan president emphasised: "They failed with the coup, with the economic sabotage... they know the Bolivarian project advances victorious in the social

arena. They know the impact of the missions (social programmes), they know how the economy is growing, that we are recovering our economic sovereignty, and they know that Venezuela is a world power when it comes to oil and gas."

Hugo Chávez hinted at a continent-wide rebellion in case he is assassinated. "As a group of Latin American workers and indigenous leaders told me recently: "if something happens to you, we, who are making an effort here to push our forces through democratic channels, will assume that those rules no longer apply'."

The Venezuelan leader accused the US government of preparing the terrain for a possible intervention in Venezuela. "Anyone who studies the behaviour of the US empire during the last century discovers a common factor; every time in the US is going to attack someone, they don't do it right away, they start by preparing their internal public opinion, Just look at the example of Iraq."

Donald Trump's 'Reverse Kissinger' Strategy

by Vijay Prashad

US President Donald Trump called Russia's President Vladimir Putin and told him that his government is committed to a peace process in Ukraine. As part of the deal, Trump's administration made it clear that sections of eastern Ukraine and the Crimea would remain in Russian hands. Speaking at NATO headquarters Trump's Defence Secretary, Pete Hegseth, said that it was 'unrealistic' to assume that Ukraine would return to its pre-2014 borders, which means that Crimea would not be part of any negotiations with Russia. NATO membership for Ukraine, he said, was not going to be possible as far as the USA was concerned. The USA, Hegseth told NATO, was not 'primarily focused' on European security, but on putting its own national interests first and foremost. The best that the European leaders at NATO could do was to demand that Ukraine have a seat at the talks, but there was very little said against the US pressure that Russia be given concessions to come to the table. Ukraine and Europe can have their say, Hegseth said, but Trump would set the agenda. "What he decides to allow and not allow is at the purview of the leader of the free world, of President Trump" Hegseth said with characteristic mid-western swagger. The cowboys, he said with his body language, are back in charge.

While Hegseth was in Brussels, Trump was in Washington with his close ally Elon Musk. Both are on a rampage to cut government spending. Over the last five decades, the US government has already shrunk, particularly when it comes to social welfare



provision. What remains are areas that have been jealously guarded by the large corporations, such as the arms industry. It had always seemed as if this industry was inviolate and that cuts in military spending in the USA would be impossible to sustain. But the arms industry can rest easy (except Lockheed Martin, which might lose its subsidy for the F-35 fighter jet); Musk and his team are not going to cut military contracts but go after the military and civilian employees. During his confirmation hearing, Hegseth told the Senators that during The Second World War the USA had seven four-star generals and now it has 44 of them. "There is an inverse relationship between the size of staffs and victory on the battlefield. We do not need more bureaucracy at the top. We need more war fighters empowered at the bottom." He said that the "fat can be cut, so (the US military) can go toward lethality".

There is a fundamental misreading of these moves by the Trump administration. They are sometimes seen as the idiosyncratic flailing of

a far-right president who is committed to putting 'America First' and so is unwilling to pursue expensive wars that are not in its interest. But this is a short-sighted and erroneous assessment of Trump's phone call with Putin on Ukraine and approach to the US military. Rather than see this as an isolationist manoeuvre, it is important to understand that Trump is attempting to pursue a Reverse Kissinger Strategy, namely, to befriend Russia to isolate China.

Trump understands that Russia is not an existential threat to the USA. The US government does not fear Russian energy sales to Europe, since these primary commodity sales do not pretend to undermine the overall American control of the global economy. However, China's rapid development of technology and science as well as of the new productive forces genuinely poses a threat to US domination of the key sectors of the global economy. It is the US perceived 'threat' from China that motivates Trump's approach to alliances and enemies.

Kissinger's strategy

Henry Kissinger (1923–2023) was one of the most influential American foreign policy bureaucrats. During the presidency of Richard Nixon from 1969 to 1974, Kissinger essentially ran the foreign policy of the USA. Both Nixon and Kissinger closely followed the dispute between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. When Nixon became president, the Sino-Soviet border dispute around Zhenbao island almost escalated with a potential Soviet nuclear strike against Beijing. Kissinger had recognised that this dispute was of great value to the USA as it prevented the two large Eurasian countries from building an essential union against the Atlantic alliance encapsulated by NATO. If Russia and China had come together, Kissinger wrote, then they would be able to undermine the foundation of Western power in the world. To prevent that alliance was essential and to use the Sino-Soviet dispute to build

a deep wedge between the two countries was the essence of Kissinger's policy. Rapprochement with China also allowed the USA to attempt to close the logistical supply line for the Vietnamese national liberation forces in their war against US aggression.

It was for that reason that Kissinger began secret talks through Pakistan with the Chinese government in 1970, made a secret trip to Beijing in 1971, and thereby opened the door for Nixon to visit China the following year. In his secret verbal report to the White House staff after his visit to China, Kissinger made the following important comment: "The Chinese were extremely serious people. They don't wish us well. We have no illusions on that score. But in terms of our overall situation, with Soviet pressure and with the situation in Southeast Asia, it is in our interest to bring the Chinese in." Nixon's epochal visit to China was entirely driven by US interests to divide Russia and China so that the USA could establish its power around the Asian continent.

Long after the USSR collapsed, Kissinger continued to make the case that the USA should befriend China, isolate Russia and subordinate Europe to continue its long-term dominion. That is the underlying argument in Kissinger's 600-page epic, *On China* (2011).

Trump's reversal

With the fall of the USSR, the US establishment developed a strategy to befriend both Russia and China, but more so Russia. It was thought amongst the foreign policy elite that Russia's subordination to the USA – under Boris Yeltsin's presidency from

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1991 to 1999 – was total and that the Russians would become a minor player on the Eurasian continent. Russia's entry into the G7 in 1998 was the pinnacle of that subservience. The return of Christianity in public in Russia as well as the promotion of Russia's Europe-facing culture suggested that Russia had embraced its Western heritage and moved away from either sovereignty or from Asia, and therefore China. In 1993, US President Bill Clinton phoned Yeltsin and said: "I want you to know that we're in this with you for the long haul."

A far-right-wing section of the American establishment identified two elements in the late 2000s. First, that Chinese technological development of their productive forces seriously threatened the intellectual property

domination by US firms. Second, that Russia's new nationalism had been premised both on sovereignty (identified by the emergence of Putin's patriotic parties) and on white supremacy and Russian Orthodoxy (such as anchored by the theories of Alexander Dugin). There is an entire bloc in the US far-

right that sees in Russian patriotic nationalism its own ideology, and it sees in Chinese Communism its adversary.

Even in his first term, Trump sought to befriend Russia to isolate China and subordinate Europe. This reversal of Kissinger's strategy is not progressive, but similarly reactionary and

dangerous. The unifying goal is to ensure the supremacy of the USA with the same strategy of division with the actors reversed. Trump was then accused of being a beneficiary of Russian interference.

What the USA is now doing is to attempt to break the relationship established between

China and Russia since 2007, when Putin made his official break from the USA at the Munich Security Conference. Good co-operation between China and Russia has moved swiftly and the two countries have a security agreement underneath the transfer of goods and services in roubles and renminbi.

Breaking up this relationship will not be easy but it is now the strategy Trump has decided to attempt to carry out.

It is worth remembering Kissinger's assessment of the Chinese leadership in 1971: "Their interest is 100 per cent political...Remember, these are men of ideological purity. Chou En-lai joined the Communist Party in France in 1920, long before there was a Chinese Communist Party. This generation didn't fight for 50 years and go on the Long March for trade." This view encapsulates not only Zhou En-lai and Mao Zedong, but also Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping. They too have been steeled in a struggle against the USA over the course of the past decade. It is unlikely that a few baubles will attract Putin to adopt Trump's reverse Kissinger strategy.

People's Democracy
(India)



• Will the war end this year?

‘It starts with words’ An Australian Zionist provocation

by Alex McKinnon

Talaat Sehia is a chef at Cairo Takeaway, a restaurant on Enmore Road in Sydney's inner west.

Talaat was working on an early Wednesday afternoon when a man came in and ordered a mint tea. The man was wearing a crisp white T-shirt, a blue-and-white baseball cap emblazoned with the Star of David and a Star of David pendant.

"He came in and ordered a tea, which Sam, the waitress gave him," Talaat says. "It was a takeaway tea, but once

he got it, he just stood there, he didn't leave. And because the place was empty, he just stood out."

Given his dress and strange behaviour, Talaat was worried the man had hostile intentions.

"I knew he was a provocateur straight away. The way he was dressed, I thought 'Oh fuck, here we go', but I just put my head down and kept cutting an onion," he says. "I thought maybe he was just a bit of a loony who would get his tea and leave."

The man, however, soon began trying to start a verbal altercation

with the waitress who had served him.

"Sam asked him whether he needed anything, to which he replied 'Do you have a problem with me because I'm Jewish?'," Talaat says. "She was taken aback by this, because she knows nothing about the situation in Palestine. She asked him if he could leave and not cause any trouble, and he asked again if it was because he was Jewish."

"He asked her to say the word 'shalom' – 'Can you say the word 'shalom' for me? Why won't you say 'shalom'? Have you got something

against Jews?'"

Talaat says the man also claimed he found a mural on the wall "intimidating" and that he felt "unsafe". Talaat posted later on social media that the mural in question depicts Umm Kulthum, an Egyptian singer and actress who died in 1975.

At some point, Sam stepped outside onto Enmore Road, where she was confronted by a journalist, cameraman and photographer from the [Australian] *Daily Telegraph* who had been waiting across the laneway.

"We didn't know who

they were, but the two men had big cameras, so I made the assumption they were some kind of media. I knew that was the situation," Talaat says. "Every time the conversation got heated, the tall cameraman would get his camera up and start filming. So he was waiting for a moment."

Sam became upset and began filming the trio – *Telegraph* journalist Danielle Gusmaroli, photographer Rohan Kelly and video producer Jeremy Span. (I have sent questions to Gusmaroli and *Daily Telegraph* editor Ben

English regarding the incident but have not heard back.)

The confrontation began to draw attention from passersby and people in nearby shops.

"Other people in the street and from neighbouring shops, just random people, came out and started telling the *Daily Telegraph* people to leave, saying 'Get out of our community, you're causing trouble'. Two Indigenous guys came out and gave them a mouthful," Talaat laughs.

At this point, Kelly began urging Gusmaroli, Span and the man in the



• The CairoTakeAway team!

white T-shirt to leave the area.

“The tall cameraman was grabbing the female journalist and saying ‘We need to leave’ because a lot of people were coming now and screaming at them,” he says. They weren’t in control of the situation anymore. That seemed obvious to the tall guy.”

The man in the white T-shirt has been identified as Ofir Birenbaum, a consultant for a software company and a prolific Zionist agitator who has been extensively quoted and profiled by News Corp publications. The Australian Jewish Association (AJA) has also described Birenbaum as a “Friend of AJA” in multiple social media

posts.

In December 2024 Birenbaum appeared on Sky News after claiming he was moved on by police after confronting a pro-Palestinian protest outside the Great Synagogue in the Sydney CBD (central business area). The protest was directed against the Synagogue’s hosting of an event with Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, an Israeli university that supplies armoured bulldozers to the IDF.

In November 2023, Birenbaum was quoted extensively in *The Australian* after organising a rally outside the electorate office of Greens senator Mehreen Faruqi, during which he and other Zionists stood in bins.

In January 2025, Birenbaum was quoted extensively in a News.com.au article about anti-Semitic graffiti in Maroubra. “Racism in general, and anti-Semitism, it doesn’t start with violence,” he said at the time. “It starts with words. It starts with good people being silent. It starts with tolerating what we see in our streets.”

On 3rd October 2024, Birenbaum was photographed outside the New South Wales (NSW) Supreme Court seemingly posing as a pro-Palestinian activist – complete with a ‘FCK ISRL’ sticker on a backpack – as a crowd of supporters waited to hear the outcome of the NSW Police application to prevent the Palestine Action Group from staging rallies in the Sydney CBD on 6th and 7th October.

As more people began shouting out the *Daily Telegraph* crew, they began walking up Enmore Road. Still filming, Sam and Talaat followed.

“Sam confronted the female journalist, saying ‘How dare you come into a restaurant intimidating workers,’” Talaat says. “And then the journalist said: ‘How dare you get appalled by a Jewish man coming into your restaurant,’ which is complete nonsense. No one was appalled, we served him – Sam doesn’t even know what a Zionist is.

“I was giving it to the cameraman, telling him: ‘You’re a grown man, this is what you

do for a living? Do you tell your kids you come into people’s workplaces and upset people? You should be ashamed of yourself.’ And he looked a bit ashamed, actually,” Talaat says. “He looked like ‘Aw fuck, I wish we weren’t here’.”

“They left in the same car. All four of them. The two cameramen, the journalist and the Zionist guy,” Talaat says.

“It was comical, like *Looney Tunes*-level comical. The way they were waiting there. Him dressed the way he was, sucking on the straw, saying ‘Say shalom, say shalom’. When he was in the store ordering the tea, they were across the lane waiting, outside Domino’s. They were three metres away! You could see them! At one point the journalist literally had her face pressed up against the window, looking from the outside in, just lurking. It was like a performance piece.

“My thoughts on News Corp are pretty ... you know. It’s poison. I have no tolerance for these people. I know they’re trash. But I was a little shocked at how obvious it was. Like, coming in the same car and waiting across the road. I know they do this kind of thing, but it was the level of amateur theatre to it. Afterwards, we had a laugh about it.”

The police arrived later that day. Initially, they seemed uninterested. “I said to the police ‘This seems to be intentional provocation’. And the cop said ‘It is, but it’s not criminal,’” Talaat says.

“I said to him: ‘What if it had been an Arab guy going into a Jewish-owned place?’ He didn’t really respond, he just kind of looked down and took some notes.”

with growing interest in the case on so-

cial media however – Cairo Takeaway owner Hashem El Masry has recounted the incident in detail on Cairo Takeaway’s Instagram – police interest in the case has picked up. On Tuesday evening, other police officers arrived and spoke to Sam. Two detectives followed up with Cairo Takeaway staff on Wednesday morning and requested the restaurant’s CCTV footage.

Despite being angry at the restaurant being targeted, Talaat hopes some good will come out of it.

“This impunity has given them the courage to do things like this,

because no one really does anything about it,” he says. “So it’s good that people are speaking up. Maybe they’ll get the message that you can’t just do this kind of thing.

“If you know Sam, she doesn’t follow the news at all, she stays right out of that. She actually asked me later that afternoon – we sat down and had a quiet cup of tea, just to calm her down – she asked me: ‘What exactly is a Zionist?’.”

“I told her ‘Now you know’.”

Guardian

Australian communist weekly

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LETTERS

Dear Comrades

The forced displacement of Palestinians is a core component of Israeli-American strategies aimed at reshaping the political and geographical landscape of the region. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Washington and his meeting with President Donald Trump was not merely about discussing the declared objectives of the war, such as recovering Israeli hostages or achieving a ceasefire. Rather, it extended to reinforcing Netanyahu's political future and discussing Palestinian displacement projects within the framework of achieving the "Greater Israel" project.

Israel and the USA are presenting Palestinians with two options: either displacement or genocide, portraying forced relocation as a "moral" choice within the framework of past peace agreements. Israel has attempted to legitimise its displacement policies by citing historical precedents, such as the 1978 peace agreement with Egypt, which included the relocation of 7,000 Jewish settlers from Sinai, and the Oslo Accords, which involved the transfer of around 1,000 settlers. Additionally, former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan led to the relocation of 8,000 settlers from Gaza and 600 from the West Bank.

The current Israeli strategy seeks to frame displacement as a humanitarian solution for Palestinians, especially by working

toward the dismantling of UNRWA, which symbolises the persistence of Palestinian refugee status. However, this narrative deliberately ignores the fact that the displaced Jewish settlers were occupying Palestinian and Arab lands, unlike the Indigenous Palestinian population.

Israel aims to consolidate its control over the West Bank through repeated military incursions, which have resulted in the displacement of 15,000 Palestinians from Jenin and 9,000 from Tulkarm. Additionally, the Israeli government is revisiting the Jordanian-Palestinian confederation project, which would encompass 90 per cent of the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is trying to persuade Jordan to accept this plan by offering political and constitutional guarantees to maintain the sovereignty of the Hashemite Kingdom.

Regarding Egypt, Israel envisions a key role for Cairo in a proposed land-swap project, which would involve relocating Gaza's population to alternative territories while compensating Egypt with land in the [Israeli] Negev. This plan seeks to establish clear borders between Palestinians and Israelis while retaining 80 per cent of Israeli settlements.

Israel sees normalisation with Saudi Arabia as a gateway to a co-ordinated regional alliance aimed at countering Iran and reshaping the political landscape of the Islamic world. This normalisation is also expected to weaken Arab and Islamic solidarity with the Palestinian cause, gradually leading to the acceptance of the status quo and the abandonment of Palestinian historical rights.

Trump's plan for the displacement of Palestinians cannot be separated from his broader economic and colonial ambitions,

including his aspirations to control Greenland, interventions in Latin America, trade wars with Canada and the EU, and confrontations with China, Russia and Iran. The forced displacement of Palestinians is being framed as "humanitarian evacuation" and reconstruction of Gaza with Arab funding, though this strategy is clearly part of long-term colonial dominance.

According to international humanitarian law, forced displacement is a war crime. The Fourth Geneva Convention applies to the occupied Palestinian territories and explicitly prohibits the forcible transfer of populations. Additionally, on 19th July 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that Israel's occupation is illegal and must end, affirming that any forced demographic changes will not alter the legal status of Palestinian lands.

The international community faces a crucial test in responding to these displacement plans – either holding those responsible accountable or tolerating such actions, which could legitimise forced displacement as a "political solution". If Israel and the USA succeed in implementing these policies, it could escalate regional conflict, potentially prompting Jordan and Egypt to annul their peace agreements with Israel and strengthening Palestinian resistance.

Palestinians' steadfastness on their land and their national identity remains the primary obstacle to these plans. History has shown that colonial policies cannot extinguish the will of the people. The coming phase may witness strategic shifts, whether through an escalation on the ground or unforeseen political developments – such as the assassination of Netanyahu, the greatest obstacle to ending the war and

achieving a just resolution to the Palestinian cause.

Fouad Baker
Palestinian jurist and politician

Dear Comrades

John Maclean was born in 1879 in Pollokshaws and lived all his life in Glasgow. His father was a potter who died when John was only nine. His mother then worked as a weaver, kept a shop and took in lodgers to make ends meet and to ensure that John got an education.

Maclean was all too well aware of the sacrifices she had made on his behalf. He would indeed finish his schooling and go on to train as a teacher at the Free Church College. He also attended evening classes and got an MA in Political Economy at Glasgow University.

Maclean had been brought up in the Calvinist Original Secession Church. He later jettisoned religion, declared himself an atheist and joined the Marxian-inclined Social Democratic Federation (SDF). He ran economics classes, addressed street corner meetings and helped form the Scottish Labour College.

The First World War was approaching, however. Maclean was appalled by the jingoism – including that of the SDF leader H M Hyndman – and opposed the hostilities from the outset. He denounced it most vehemently as a greedy struggle for markets by imperialist powers and was soon in trouble with the authorities as a result. In the end he would be arrested and sentenced six times – and lose his teaching job with the Govan School Board as well!

What he did welcome by contrast was the Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolsheviks made him their Consul in Scotland and an

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

UNTIL 25 APRIL
Wellcome Collection: *Hard Graft: Work, Health and Rights*. Free exhibition. 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE.

UNTIL JUNE 2025
Townsend Theatre Productions: *Behold Ye Ramblers*. Touring play by Neil Gore. See TTP website for details of venues.

UNTIL 15 JULY
Tate Britain: *Artists Against Fascism and War*. Exhibition at Millbank, London SW1P 4RG.

UNTIL 25 JUL
Working Class Movement Library: *Collectors, The Camera-man, The Poets and the Pits: Miners' Strike 40th Anniversary Exhibition*. Afternoons. WCML, 51 Crescent, Salford M5 4WX.

SAT 1 MAR
Stand Up To Racism: Fighting for anti-racist workplaces. Conference for trade unionists, 11:00–17:00, Wesley Euston Hotel, 81–103 Euston Street, London NW1 2EZ and online.

WED 5 MAR
Socialist History Society: Laleh Khalili on Imperial Politics in the Indian Ocean. 19:00, Zoom meeting. Register on SHS website.

THUR 6 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Rachel Holmes on Eleanor Marx on Clerkenwell Green. 18:00, in person. MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. Book on MML website.

SAT 8 MAR
Working Class Movement Library: International Women's Day Open Archive Day and second-hand book sale. 11:00–15:00 at WCML.

SAT 8 MAR
International Women's Day March 2025. 13:00, Mercat Cross, Royal Mile, Edinburgh EH1 1RF.

MONS 10 MAR–5 MAY
Marx Memorial Library: *Marxism and History: Introducing Historical Materialism*. 10 Week online course. Book on MML website.

SAT 15 MAR
New Communist Party: Reception to commemorate the life of Karl Marx. 18:00, Party Centre, Clapham, London SW1.

SAT 15 MAR
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Cuba Vive fundraiser. 19:00, Warwick Arms Hotel, 17 High St, Warwick CV34 4AT.

SUN 16 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Annual Marx Memorial Oration. 13:30, Highgate Cemetery, Swains Lane, London N6 6PJ.

SUN 16–SAT 29 MAR
Coba Solidarity Campaign: Screen Cuba, Film festival: London and elsewhere. Full details and booking at: <https://screencuba.uk/>

MON 18 MAR

Liberation: Peter Mertens (Workers Party of Belgium) gives the Fenner Brockway Lecture. Central London. Details to follow.

THUR 20 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Mary Davis the Ford Dagenham Women's strike. 19:00, Online event. Book on MML website.

SAT 22 MAR
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament; Protest: 12:00, Town Centre leafletting. 13:00–15:00, Rally, High Level Bridge over Devonshire Dock, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria.

SAT 22 MAR
Campaign for Trade Union Freedom: Rally on the Employment Rights Bill. Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BB.

SUN 23 MAR
Scottish Morning Star Supporters Spring Conference. Scottish TUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridge-ton, Glasgow G40 1BP.

THUR 27 MAR
Marx Memorial Library: Decolonising Education: learning for the Future. 18:00, Onsite and Online event. Book on MML website.

SAT 29 MAR
Stand Up To Racism: We demand change – Summit of resistance. Central London (venue to be confirmed).

SAT 29 MAR
Arise A Festival of Left Ideas: Socialism or Barbarism Day School. 10:30–16:30, London. Venue to be announced. Book on Eventbrite.

THUR 3 APRIL
Socialist History Society: James Crossley on AL Morton: Life in the Radical Tradition. 19:00, Zoom meeting. Register on SHS website.

MON 14–FRI 25 APRIL
Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Camp protesting against US nuclear weapons returning to Britain. RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Lakenheath, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

MONDAY 28 APRIL
Workers Memorial Day: See TUC website for nationwide local events.

THUR 1 MAY
International Workers' Day. London rally: Assemble 12:00 for March to Trafalgar Square. See TUC and SUC websites for other events to 5 May.

SAT 7 JUNE
Marx Memorial Library: Book-sale. 11:00 at Library.

FRI 18–SUN 20 JULY
Tolpuddle Martyrs Festival: Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum, Dorchester Road, Tolpuddle, Dorset, DT2 7EH. Book on TTM website.

SUN 7 SEPT
Burston Strike School: Annual Rally, Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk IP22 5TP.

The editor welcomes letters from our readers. If you have a contribution to make please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday.

You can send your letters to: PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ, or email party@NCP.clara.net

...continued from page 8

honorary President of the First Congress of Soviets. And he continued to fight on for an independent Scotland through his Scottish Workers' Republican Party.

The cumulative effects of repeated periods of imprisonment, often in harsh conditions, had however, taken their toll on his health. Maclean died of pneumonia at the end of 1923. But over a century on we still remember John Maclean, a great revolutionary socialist.

Alan Stewart
Wakefield

Dear Comrades

'Made in China 25' was a project launched by the Chinese government in 2015 with the ambition of transforming the country from a low-cost manufacturer into a high-tech superpower. The aim was to reduce reliance on foreign technology and vulnerable supply chains. Companies were assisted to become world leaders. Against a background of constant threats, harsh sanctions and tariff barriers the strategic national plan has been an outstanding success. China has emerged as a global economic and technical front runner. It is in a strong position to work with the other socialist countries and also the emerging new economies who face the same Imperialist aggressiveness.

The USA, imbued with perceived exceptionalism, sustained by its huge economic clout and supported by a massive military might, always assumed that it would remain invincible. It has adopted a geopolitical strategy aimed at maintaining its world hegemony. However, its schemes have backfired as China has developed its own alternative high-technology products and the growth of Belt & Road and BRICS now provide the secure basis for international development. State

monopoly capitalism, as practiced in the USA, has up till now enabled it to destroy or weaken any competitors. Long gone are the days when competing companies vied, on a level playing field, to produce the best product.

China's investment and innovations have enabled it to set high standards and to become a world leader in quality production and infrastructure development at competitive cost. New and proposed high speed rail links for trade and tourism linking China with Laos and Vietnam will bring great benefits to South East Asia, ensuring stable economic development in the region. Cuba, which has had to endure harsh sanctions since it was established in 1959, has now joined BRICS, is a member of the Belt & Road Energy Partnership and receives good support from Russia. After years of US-imposed hardship the future for this Caribbean island now looks much brighter. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's increasing co-operation with its large neighbours may soon result in high speed rail links with both China and Russia.

A strong China can provide the support for sustainable and stable world economic development. Sputnik moments have occurred recently. China has been able to produce microchips and re-enter the high-end mobile-phone market and also to make major breakthroughs in artificial intelligence using new innovative computer technologies enabling less expensive chips to be used instead of more advanced alternatives. An example of this is the Deep Seek app. This is a free AI chat-bot that can answer your questions and queries. Over \$1 trillion was wiped off the stock value of Western companies as it was realised that the USA had finally met its match.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Scottish
Political
News

by our Scottish political
affairs correspondent

The times are certainly a-changing north of the border as nationalists and unionists close ranks to support imperialism and the Ukrainian puppet regime in its time of need and Nigel Farage plans his first public visit to Scotland since 2019. Sir Keir Starmer came in for some flak from the left when he decided to pump up the defence budget on the eve of his talks with Donald Trump in Washington this week. But not from our First Minister, John Swinney, who backed Starmer's decision to raise defence spending following the Trump initiative for

talks with Russia to end the Ukraine war while branding Nigel Farage an "accomplice to the Russian agenda" in a rant against "the threat from the far-right".

Swinney told reporters this week that: "When it comes to Ukraine, we have been clear. We want Ukraine's long-term security guaranteed in any deal and that Putin is a despicable aggressor." This is nothing new. The nationalists, who want Scotland back in the European Union, have long toed the line of Franco-German imperialism over Ukraine.

Swinney then went on to call on opposition parties and civic groups to "step up" ahead of next year's Scottish parliamentary elections to prove to voters disillusioned with the state of politics that "more unites us than divides us".

His attack on Farage and his call for a cross-party summit to "draw a line in the sand" to counter the rise of far-right politics puts the Faragists centre-stage – at least for the time being.

The SNP leader says he "accepts and understands that people are angry" but is worried that in response to the discord some are finding "attractiveness in the politics of Farage and the far right. And I think that's the wrong choice."

"And I'm simply making the point today that it's important that those of us who are repulsed by the politics of Farage and the far right come together to give the leadership and stress the importance of the values that we hold dear about our society."

But there's more to this than meets the eye. Farage's Reform party is certainly gaining ground in Scotland. But that's largely at the expense of Labour and the Scottish Conservatives. That's why Professor John Curtice thinks Swinney's real motive is actually to raise Farage's profile to "sow division" amongst Labour and the Conservatives with calls

to "lock out" Reform UK.

"I think Mr Swinney, apart from perhaps a genuine wish to try to draw a line against Reform, is perhaps not unaware that politically, it's advantageous to him to sow further division within the unionists' ranks," Curtice said. Scotland's leading political guru thinks Reform is on track to win around 12 to 16 seats in the Scottish Parliament. Although this poses no real threat to the SNP it will add to the difficulties facing Scottish Labour and the Scottish Conservative & Unionist Party. This was seen clearly at the lacklustre...

Scottish
Labour
conference...

...in Glasgow last weekend. Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar used the platform to launch next year's Holyrood election campaign with the usual platitudes and empty pledges while vowing to "unlock Scotland's potential" after almost two decades of SNP rule. Sarwar said the SNP had held back Scotland, describing them as "tired and out of ideas", and hit out at their record on the health service, the economy and government waste.

At the rostrum, Starmer himself unveiled a £200m investment in Grangemouth to support its future

following the closure of the oil refinery this year. He also announced that those who are made redundant will receive 18 months of full pay, with local businesses that employ redundant workers receiving national insurance relief.

The Labour leader also warned of "dangerous right-wing politics" amid a rise in support for Farage's Reform UK, saying that parties such as Reform would seek to shape the political debate if Labour did not pave the way for improved living standards. Starmer said: "If we don't show a path to the future, others will fill that void. In fact, they already are," and ended with a call for "a Labour government in Westminster, a Labour government in Holyrood, with Anas Sarwar – a Labour First Minister!"

But even in Labour's ranks there's doubt about whether either of them can lead them to victory in Scotland. Or as the pro-nationalist daily, *The National*, put it "as the Prime Minister took to the stage on Sunday, journalists noticed that it was a far cry from 'standing room only'. In fact, you could have fit Scottish Labour's entire Westminster delegation into the empty seats in the room – and have plenty of space to spare. The lack of attendees didn't go unnoticed..."

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A friendship forged in war

by New Worker
correspondent

The Chinese Embassy hosted a special reception in London last weekend for the families of the *Lisbon Maru* survivors, commemorating a heroic rescue during the Second World War and celebrating the Spring Festival.

In October 1942 the *Lisbon Maru*, a freighter requisitioned by the Japanese army to transport more than 1,800 British prisoners of war from Hong Kong to Japan, was torpedoed by an American submarine near the Zhoushan islands off Shanghai. As the ship sank, local fishermen risked their lives to rescue over 300 POWs.

At the event the Chinese Ambassador Zheng Zeguang recounted the rescue that stands as a testament to the time when



• Chinese ambassador Zheng Zeguang welcomes the guests at the reception.

China and Britain fought side by side against Japanese fascist aggression. The rescue has left tales of the profound friendship between the people of the two

countries – a friendship that “will never fade” and “has become a valuable asset” for bilateral relations, he added.

Lindsey Archer, the

niece of a British soldier who perished when the ship went down, said that events like this help strengthen bonds and foster new friendships. She ex-

pressed that the families of both the British survivors and the Chinese rescuers have become a new community for her. Keeping the memory of their ancestors

alive, she said, is crucial, as “what they suffered, lost and sacrificed has shaped where we are today”.

Last year, Lindsey, along with a dozen other descendants of the British POWs, visited China to pay tribute to the fallen at the wreck site in Zhoushan. Kenneth Salmon, whose father was a Royal Artillery sergeant rescued from the sinking *Lisbon Maru*, described the emotional connection he felt during the visit. Reflecting on the friendships forged during the trip, he said there is “an emotional attachment” in Zhoushan.

He also expressed his appreciation for the presence of young children at the reception, stressing the importance of preserving the story of the rescue for future generations to learn about their ancestry and their family history.

REVIEW

by Ben Soton

Tales from an heroic age

Odyssey by Stephen Fry. Penguin: London. Softback, 2025; 432pp, rrp: £10.99. Hardback, 2024; 432pp, rrp: £25.

Odyssey by Stephen Fry is the latest translation of Homer's epic poem. The original, believed to have been written sometime in the eighth century BC, was probably written in an archaic form of Ancient Greek, probably Doric. Suffice to say there have been numerous translations of *The Odyssey*; some in poetic form others in prose.

The *Odyssey* has had an immense influence on Western literature. The *Aeneid* by the Roman Virgil has numerous similarities with *The Odyssey*; both stories originate in the Trojan War. James Joyce's *Ulysses* (Joyce uses the Ro-

man name for the hero *Odysseus*) is also based on it. In modern science fiction the famous phrase from Darth Vader to Luke Skywalker, “Luke I am your father”, has its origins in the meeting between *Odysseus* and his son, Telemachus, while the term ‘*odyssey*’ is often synonymous with any epic journey.

Odyssey by Stephen Fry differs little from previous translations of Homer's account of the king of Ithaca's return from the Trojan war. His desire is to return to his wife Penelope, whom he has been parted from for 20 years, and his son Telemachus, who was little more than a babe in arms when he left. Penelope is continually pestered by suitors whom she manages to outwit who want to marry her and take the

throne. Time is running out and few believe *Odysseus* to be alive. Meanwhile, in his attempt to return home *Odysseus* faces Cyclops, sea monsters, and is continually shipwrecked.

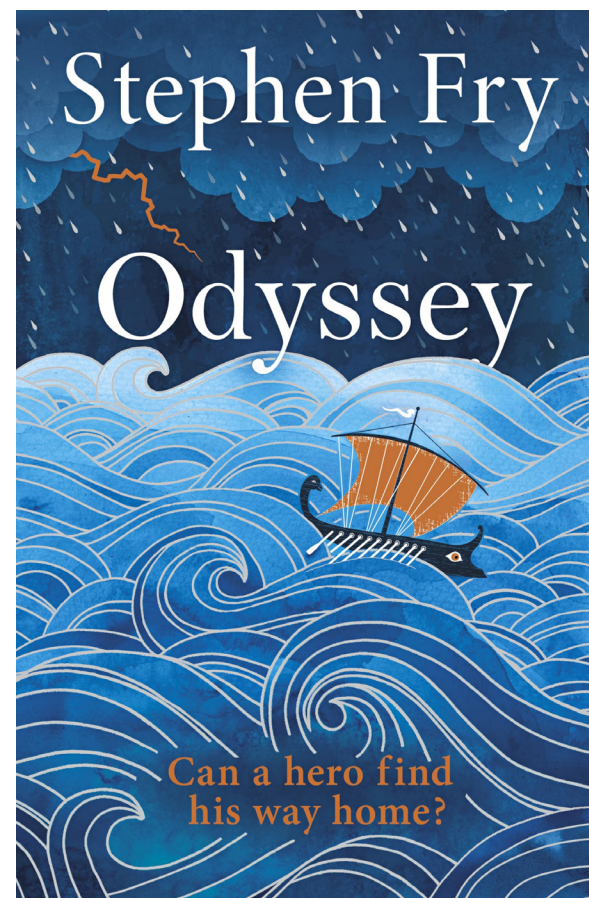
Fry's translation, which is written in prose format and reads more like a novel, differs slightly in that he makes passing reference to the Trojan prince Aeneas. Aeneas fled from Troy, put to the torch by the victorious Greeks, and his descendants eventually founded Rome.

Whilst *Odyssey* ends with the defeat of the suitors, other translations continue with further stories. For instance, the EV Rieu translation of 1946 describes the brutal killing of the disloyal female slaves of his household who had sided with the suitors. Fry

makes no mention of this, even in the prologue, making this translation more sympathetic to *Odysseus*.

The problem with the story is that so little is known about the original author, Homer. Some scholars even doubt his existence and attribute the work to a number of different writers. Perhaps Homer, assuming he existed, simply played an editorial role.

Nevertheless, *The Odyssey* is still a timeless work of literature. It has inspired numerous translations, television series and feature films, and will continue to arouse curiosity for many years to come. On that note, *Odyssey* by Stephen Fry is well worth reading and will make a worthwhile addition to any bookshelf.



Will America leave the UN?

A group of Republican senators have introduced a bill to “terminate” the USA’s membership of the United Nations, alleging that the body has “devolved into a platform for tyrants and a venue to attack America and her allies”. But “I think it’s a very poor recommendation” says retired US Army Lieut-Colonel Earl Rasmussen commenting on the new bill, introduced in the Senate last week and dubbed the ‘Disengaging Entirely From the United Nations Debacle (DEFUND) Act’.

The USA was a key founding member of the UN, and its withdrawal “would be very potentially damaging to the organisation,” he said. “Would it be able to survive? I think it could. I think you’ve got China and Russia providing strong leadership. I don’t know



what the influence of France and the UK [would be]...because they usually vote however the United States wants.”

Obviously, a US pull-out would require relocating the UN out of New York, ideally to a neutral country. In any case, a UN-type body is vital, Rasmussen stressed, recalling the sad fate of its predecessor, the League of Nations, and emphasising that “there

needs to be a mechanism for dialogue, and that’s essential. You can’t be a spoiled brat throwing a temper tantrum if you don’t get your way.”

Without it, there would be “more tensions, potentially more conflicts around the world” he warned. “If the UN did dissolve, I think then it would be up to Great Powers to individually kind

of oversee regions of influence and work out their differences to address some of the different conflicts that would occur, and the disasters that might occur to respond to as well.”

Besides security and dialogue, Rasmussen says the UN’s other work can’t just be thrown out as well, pointing out the body has “done a lot of things on the human

rights side, medical assistance, food and issues with famine, conflicts with rebel-type groups that they’ve been able to come in and act as a kind of peacekeeper” with. If the UN disappeared, “it would diminish access to a humanitarian support”.

The USA, which accounts for about a third of the UN’s budget, isn’t the only power expressing

gripes with the international organisation, with Russia and other BRICS powers calling for its comprehensive reform into a more inclusive body, particularly at the Security Council level.

Last October, the BRICS’ Kazan Summit Declaration reaffirmed the need for “comprehensive reform of the United Nations, including its Security Council, with a view to making it more democratic, representative, effective and efficient, and to increase the representation of developing countries in the Council’s memberships so that it can adequately respond to prevailing global challenges and support the legitimate aspirations of emerging and developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America...to play a greater role in international affairs”.

Sputnik

On a wing and a prayer?

by Guillermo Alvarado

A number of European leaders held an emergency meeting in Paris last week to analyse where the continental bloc stands in relations with US President Donald Trump, both on trade issues and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

At the invitation of their French counterpart, Emmanuel Macron, the leaders of the UK, Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands, Den-

mark and the European Union’s institutions gathered to discuss their role on a world stage dominated by the controversial head of the White House.

There are two fundamental points on which these European powers feel overlooked, one of them being the imposition of additional tariffs on products exported to the USA, which, they argue, contradicts their status as very close partners.

This measure has been perceived by some as a betrayal,

since the EU, instead of becoming a balancing factor in the world, has chosen to follow in the footsteps of Washington and the warmongering NATO alliance.

With bitterness they are discovering once again that the USA has no friends, it has only interests, and to guarantee them it does not mind going over anyone’s head, no matter how close they think they are to Washington.

A recent example was when Trump decided to completely

ignore his ‘allies’ in the alleged search for the end of the armed conflict in Eastern Europe.

Of course, this does not mean that the US president loves peace and the welfare of humanity, but for practical reasons, namely economic. Ukraine needs to be rebuilt, and Washington wants not a slice, but the whole pie of this juicy business.

In order better to understand the situation of the EU, several analysts point to the characteristics of

the meeting in Paris, which show the serious cracks in this bloc.

Only seven of the 27 members of the body were summoned, which means that not all of them are travelling in the same carriage, or even in the same train. This makes

the junior partners even more uncomfortable, as they feel left out of the important decisions, while the others totter on the brink of disaster like a hapless painter whose ladder has been kicked from under him...

Radio Havana Cuba

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Israeli atrocities exposed

by Ed Newman

An independent human rights agency has revealed shocking details of the Israeli army's massacre of 90 Palestinian civilians from the Juha family in Gaza during its 15-month-long genocidal war.

The Israeli army attacked the Juha family's home in the eastern part of Gaza City shortly after the first truce ended in early December 2023 without warning or military necessity, killing about 90 civilians – including 71 women and children – and injured dozens more, the Euro-Med Monitor reported on Monday.

This was one of the

most horrifying massacres carried out by Israel during its genocidal war against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip. The investigation found that the Israeli military assault included an attack on the Juha family building located in the densely populated Sha'af area, which, along with the Shuja'iyya neighbourhood, was a focus of the offensive.

Israeli warplanes bombarded the Juha family's home in the Tuffah neighbourhood east of Gaza City on the morning of 6th December 2023. The bombardment completely destroyed the house – a compound consisting of two adjacent buildings, killing all of its occupants.

At least 117 people –

including several relatives who had been forcibly relocated from the Zeitoun neighbourhood – were living in the building at the time of the attack, with women, children and the elderly comprising the majority.

The bombing killed most occupants. Some were dragged out from under the debris, and others were thrown outside by the force of the explosion. At least 17 people suffered burns, wounds and fractures. Some of them needed to have limbs amputated.

The explosion was so powerful that it ripped apart the bodies of many victims, leaving their remains lying across the street and even on the roofs of buildings close by. Ap-

proximately 56 people were recovered from beneath the debris. More than 34 bodies remain buried beneath the rubble.

The Euro-Med Monitor team conducted multiple field surveys of the main site. The targeting of the Juha family was a grave violation of international humanitarian law, constituting various war crimes against civilians and civilian property.

The team described these actions as fully-fledged crimes against humanity but also as part of a large-scale, organised genocidal assault on the civilian population of the Gaza Strip that began in October 2023.

The report highlights that the targeting of the Juha family home is emblematic

of a broader pattern of a deliberate strategy to target Palestinian civilians and infrastructure. This pattern includes the partial or complete destruction of 436,000 homes (roughly 92 per cent of the homes in the Gaza Strip) and the killing of more than 54,000 Palestinians, most of whom were inside their homes.

Liali Raid Zaki Juha, 14, a survivor of the massacre who was pulled from under the rubble, told the Euro-Med Monitor team: "I was talking with my uncle's family when, suddenly, I couldn't feel anything and found myself buried under the rubble, surrounded by a raging fire."

"The fire was so in-

tense that my uncle's family melted right before me, and there was no one to rescue us. My uncle's family kept screaming for help – 'Get us out, Dad, get us out!' – with my uncle replying that he couldn't," she said. "The ceiling was collapsing on us, and they were only able to dig a small hole to reach us. They began smashing through with a heavy hammer to pull us from under the rubble, and after a lot of struggle, they managed to do it."

The investigation called on the International Criminal Court to examine all of Israel's crimes in the Gaza Strip, including the murder of the Juha family.

Radio Havana Cuba

Right-wing surge in German elections

In Germany's federal election Sunday, the centre-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU) came out on top, but with only 28.6 per cent, down from its height of 40 per cent several years ago. While CDU leader Friedrich Merz will likely be the new chancellor, his party recorded its second worst result since the founding of the Federal Republic in 1949.

The other traditional centrist party, the Social Democrats (SPD), received its worst result in over 130 years, securing only 16.4 per cent. The Greens and the free market liberals of the FDP

– both of which had been governing together with the SPD until November 2024 – also suffered significant losses. The FDP did not make it over the five per cent hurdle to enter parliament.

After a late surge in support, Die Linke (The Left) scored nearly nine per cent, giving it dozens of seats. It dominated in the capital, Berlin, and gained 30,000 new members. During the election, its campaign workers knocked on over 300,000 doors. A smaller breakaway group, the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), scored nearly two-and-a-half million votes but will likely not win any seats in the parliament.



• The left-social democratic Linke thanks its supporters!

The biggest story out of the election, however, was the historic gains made by the extreme right. The Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) will now be the second strongest force in parliament, having won over 20 per cent – more than 10 million votes – doubling its share. Known for being staunchly anti-immigrant, anti-EU, and for questioning the history of the Holocaust, the party enjoyed the endorsement of Elon Musk and was given further legitimacy when its leader, Alice Weidel, recently scored a meeting with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

The party, whose traditional support base is

the petty bourgeoisie and fascist elements associated with the old National Democratic Party (itself the heir of Hitler's Nazis), was able to draw strength this time particularly from young people, the working class and the unemployed.

Of the votes cast by 18–24-year-olds, the AfD gained 14 per cent more than it won four years ago. A similar pattern could be seen with 25–34-year-olds. In eastern Germany, on the territory of the former German Democratic Republic, the party was by far the strongest political force, winning one out of every three votes.

People's World (USA)