

New terror attacks on Gaza!

by our Arab affairs correspondent

Israel has broken the truce in Gaza. Innocent men, women and children are being slaughtered. Air raids are once again spreading death and destruction across the beleaguered Palestinian enclave this week. Anglo-American air-strikes are targeting Yemen. Hundreds of Palestinian civilians, including women and children, have been killed in the terror raids that followed the breakdown of talks aimed at getting the release of Israeli prisoners held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian and Yemeni resistance has responded by rocketing Tel Aviv, forcing the temporary closure of Ben Gurion international airport. And the Houthi government in north Yemen has resumed its blockade of Israel with missile attacks on Western freighters and imperialist warships in the Red Sea.

The wave of deadly air-strikes that shattered the fragile ceasefire has so far claimed the lives of at least 970 people across the besieged territory. The health ministry in the Gaza Strip also registered “one death and five severe injuries among foreign staff working for UN institutions”. It said Israel attacked a UN office in

Deir el-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, on Wednesday.

The UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) confirmed the death of one of its staff by an explosive that was “dropped or fired” on its building in Deir el-Balah, adding that five others were injured. UNOPS Executive Director Jorge Moreira da Silva said he was “shocked and devastated” by the death of a staff member. “This was not an accident” he said, adding that “attacks against humanitarian premises are a breach of international law.”

UN Secretary-General António Guterres says he is “shocked” by the Israeli airstrikes in Gaza and has called for the ceasefire to be respected. Guterres called for humanitarian aid to resume for people in Gaza and for the hostages held by Hamas to be released unconditionally.

The Israelis blame Hamas, the Palestinian Muslim Brotherhood that runs Gaza, for rejecting Israeli and American proposals for another prisoner exchange to prolong the first stage of the truce agreement. But Hamas rightly say that the proposals were unacceptable because it was not what had been agreed upon in the first place – a second stage prisoner swap that would also include the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from the Palestinian territory.

Israel has banned all aid to Gaza and cut off its electricity supplies. Now Zionist troops are pouring into the enclave in a new offensive clearly intended to drive the Palestinians out to clear the land for American property speculation and Zionist settlement.

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Donald Trump “fully supports Israel and



• Emergency protest in Whitehall.

the IDF [Israeli armed forces] in the actions that they’ve taken in recent days”. But People’s China, Russia, the Arabs and most of the Global South have condemned the Israeli war-crimes.

China reiterated its full support for the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, foremost among them the establishment of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, Liu Jianchao, head of the International Department of the Communist Party of China, told Arab ambassadors in Beijing that China would remain committed to its positions in support of justice and peace and considers the Palestinian issue to be the core of the Middle East issue. He emphasised China’s unwavering support for the just Palestinian position and its endeavour to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting solution. He further voiced China’s rejection over using Gaza as a bargaining chip for political gain, considering it an integral part of the occupied Palestinian territory.

FUND

We raised £620 for the fighting fund last week, including £516 at our Marx reception in London and £100 donation “in memory of Sid French” the founder of the NCP. The March appeal now stands at £1,025. We need to hit the £3,500 mark by the end of the month to guarantee the survival of the *New Worker*.

War abroad and austerity at home. That’s all Labour and the rest of the parliamentary pack have to offer workers these days. Millions eke out a miserable existence on benefits or bread-line wages and the rich flaunt their wealth with impunity. These high castes think their rule will last forever. We must prove them wrong.

Our paper is the only communist weekly in Britain. Help us counter the lies of the bourgeois media that are rammed down our throats every day in the mainstream media. Fight to get the communist answer to the capitalist crisis heard on the street. Campaign for national liberation and peace.

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

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

We can't stop now!

Thousands are being massacred in Gaza, and the Western world remains silent. Israel has treacherously broken the ceasefire. For the last two weeks, Israel has completely blockaded Gaza, using starvation as a weapon of war as it continues to kill Palestinians with impunity in the occupied West Bank as well as the beleaguered Palestinian enclave. And now, with the blessing of Donald Trump the Zionists have resumed their genocidal assault on Gaza.

The Israeli war-machine has killed at least 45,000 Palestinians in Gaza and displaced more than 90 per cent of Gaza's population. Palestinians in Gaza are facing imminent famine. Yet our political leaders still refuse to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and for Britain to stop arming Israel.

All we get are weasel words from Starmer. His Foreign Minister, David Lammy, told the House of Commons on Monday that Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip was "appalling and unacceptable" and "a breach of international law". The next day it was watered-down by Downing Street. Starmer's spokesman Dave Pares refused to repeat that line, telling reporters that "our position remains that Israel's actions in Gaza have a clear risk of breaking international humanitarian law". Shameful nonsense.

Hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets in London and all over the country to demand a halt to Zionist aggression and call for justice for the Palestinian Arabs. As Israel's genocidal assault continues, we must keep on taking action until the Palestinians win their fight for freedom. We can't stop now!

Tax the rich instead of Labour's new austerity plan

Opposition to Labour's new austerity programme is growing. "Slashing disability benefits is a cruel political choice that will cost lives" says Jeremy Corbyn. The former Labour leader says none of the cuts announced are necessary and the government should tax the super-rich instead. Diane Abbott dismisses Sir Keir Starmer's claim that the cuts in benefits had a moral purpose. "This is not about morality," she says. It is "about the Treasury's wish to balance the country's books on the back of the most vulnerable and poor people in this society". And the Greens tell Starmer that millions were struggling in "a deeply unfair, unequal economic system" while billionaires got ever richer. Why put the burden for tackling the crisis on the elderly, children, the sick and disabled "rather than on the shoulders of the super-rich with a wealth tax".

The Starmer government pleads poverty to justify means-testing the pensioners' winter fuel benefit. It won't pay compensation to the three million or so women born in the 1950s who were not properly informed about the state pension age increase. But it can find plenty to fuel the proxy war against Russia and pay for Trident and the rest of our so-called nuclear deterrent.

The Labour biggies and the ruling class that they serve maintain that capitalism is the only game in town. And it is – but only for themselves. Capitalism, in the final analysis, is simply a system designed to perpetuate the rule of the landowners, industrialists and capitalists to ensure that a tiny handful of parasites can live the lives of Roman emperors off the backs of millions upon millions of working people. There is only one solution to the capitalist crisis – socialism!

The Voice of America bites the dust

Last week Michael Abramowitz, the director of the Voice of America (VOA), an international broadcaster whose parent agency is the US Agency for Global Media (USAGM), confirmed that he and "virtually the entire staff" of 1,300 had been placed on leave. Funding for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio Free Asia, and Middle East Broadcasting Networks, which are also parts of USAGM, has also been frozen. The so-called 'beacon of freedom', VOA, has now been discarded by its own government like a dirty rag.

Founded in 1942, VOA became a frontline propaganda tool in the ideological confrontation of the Cold War. In recent decades, under the banner of promoting so-called 'freedom and democracy', it has broadcast in over 40 languages worldwide, attempting to shape the image of the USA as a 'moral high ground'.

Its independence and credibility have long been questioned, however. Known for stirring up conflicts, inciting social divisions and even participating in regime change efforts, VOA is widely recognised as Washington's carefully crafted propaganda machine, earning itself a notorious reputation on the global stage. Similar to Radio Free Asia and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, its primary function is to serve Washington's need to attack other countries based on ideological demands.

When it comes to China-related reporting, VOA has an appalling track record. From smearing human rights in China's Xinjiang to hyping up disputes in the South China Sea, from supporting "Taiwan independence" forces to backing Hong Kong rioters, from fabricating the so-called "China virus" narrative to promoting the claim of China's "over-capacity", almost every malicious falsehood about China has VOA's fingerprints all over it.

A former VOA employee said that he didn't realise until he came to China that the VOA news reports he used to read out every day were completely opposite to the real situation in China.

The reporter also said that some people working for VOA were dismissed because they suggested increasing positive coverage of China.

Clearly VOA has never been a 'fair and impartial' media outlet, but rather thoroughly biased 'propaganda poison'. Now in Washington, against the backdrop of reducing federal agency funding, the decision to stop funding for broadcasters such as the VOA has immediately prompted some anti-China politicians in the USA to label this move as "a massive gift" to China, effectively tearing off the fig leaf of Voice of America as a propaganda tool themselves.

Last month, Elon Musk criticised VOA, stating that "nobody listens to them anymore" and that "it's just radical left crazy people talking to themselves while torching \$1 billion a year of US taxpayer money". This may reflect the views of a significant portion of the American public.

Perhaps the US government has also realised that continuing to waste substantial national funds on these outdated and ineffective institutions is neither meaningful nor in the best interest of the country. In fact, the continued existence of these institutions only brings more chaos and creates more trouble for the world.

The Cambodian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation once publicly criticised VOA for lacking "professional ethics" and for using dirty tactics to smear normal interactions and co-operation between Cambodia and China. In 2023, Kyrgyzstan ordered the closure of the local branch of Radio Free

Europe/Radio Liberty, and last year, Russia designated Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty as an "undesirable organisation".

The recent suspension of employees at VOA evokes memories of the absurd drama in which a certain anti-China thinktank in Australia publicly complained about lacking funds due to cuts in US government funding. This further underscores the awkward reality of the industrial chain behind the 'cognitive warfare' narrative concerning China: without financial backers, it is difficult to sustain.

In the information age, the monopoly of information held by some of the traditional Western media is being shattered. The narrative hegemony maintained by VOA as a lie machine can be broken at any moment by a short video from the scene posted by a netizen. The carefully constructed 'iron curtain of public opinion' they have built is also on the verge of collapse under the impact of countless media and self-media showcasing authentic content. As more Americans begin to break through their information cocoons and see a real world and a multidimensional China, the demonising narratives propagated by VOA will ultimately become a laughingstock of the times.

The Voice of America was a Cold War propaganda operation that no longer has a place in today's multipolar world. Whether it is VOA or anti-China think-tanks, budget reductions – layoffs or even complete closures of these institutions are inevitable outcomes, leading them to be swept into the dustbin of history.

Global Times



• The world is sick of American lies.

Workers' Notes

One Struggle! One Fight!

by New Worker correspondent

Activists from International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity (IUAFS) joined the National Palestine March in London on Saturday to make the links between the wars waged by NATO imperialism and its proxy Zionist Israel in Gaza, Yemen, Lebanon and Ukraine. As at many previous Palestine protests, they received an overwhelmingly positive response from those on the march. The IUAFS protest also made the point that the Global South, representing the majority of humanity, was overwhelmingly opposed to Israel's genocidal methods in Gaza, while most developing countries did not support the West's sanctions against Russia or support the Zelensky regime in Ukraine by sending weapons, and had resisted Western bullying and pressure to change their positions.

Zionist ethnic cleansing plan goes back decades

by Ed Newman

Historical documents from the British National Archives have revealed that the British and American governments were informed of a clandestine Israeli plan more than 50 years ago to forcibly transfer Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to northern Egypt.

According to the documents, the Israelis had informed London and Washington of their plans to have the Palestinians resettled in the occupied Egyptian Sinai peninsula after occupying Gaza, the West Bank, Arab East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights following the 1967 Six-Day War.

Now Donald Trump has reignited controversy by reiterating his intention to "clean out" the Gaza Strip by forcibly relocating its Palestinian population to Egypt and Jordan. Trump said Egypt and Jordan would agree



but both Egyptian President Abdel Fatah el-Sissi and Jordan's King Abdullah have rejected this old plan devised by the Israelis decades ago.

The plan has been met with opposition from various quarters, including US allies and the international community, who say that such a move would constitute ethnic cleansing and could lead to further instability in the region.

In the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israelis destroyed the Egyptian and Syrian air force, gaining control of the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem, as well as the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt.

The British records showed that its analysts estimated that when the Israelis seized the Gaza Strip, there were 200,000 refugees in the enclave from other areas of Palestine, cared for by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), and another 150,000 who were indigenous Palestinian inhabitants of the Strip.

During and after the Six-Day War, the Israelis destroyed the enclave's economy. The documents said Gaza was not "economically viable due to security and social problems created by camp life and guerrilla activities that caused increasing numbers of casualties".

During the period between 1968 and 1971, 240 Arab and Palestinian fighters were killed and 878 others were wounded, while 43 Israeli soldiers were killed and 336 wounded in Gaza, according to the British documents.

The Arab League intervened and announced its decision to "adopt joint Arab measures to support the resistance in the Strip". At the same time, the British embassy in Tel Aviv monitored Israeli moves to displace thousands of Palestinians to El-Arish, located in the north of the occupied Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, approximately 54

kilometres from the Gaza-Egypt border.

The Israelis' secret plan included the "forced transfer" of Palestinians to Egypt or other Israeli territories, in an attempt to reduce the intensity of the resistance operations against the occupation in the Strip.

British Ambassador to Tel Aviv, Ernest John Ward Barnes, informed his superiors in London of Israeli actions aimed at moving Palestinians from Gaza to El-Arish in January 1971. "The only questionable Israeli action from the point of view of international law seems to be the resettlement of some Gazan refugees on Egyptian territory at El Arish," Barnes said in a dispatch to the Foreign Office.

Barnes said in the same dispatch that the Americans were also aware of the Israeli actions but they weren't willing to raise the issue with Tel Aviv. "We understand that the American Embassy here broadly shares the above analysis and have recommended to Washington that they should not take up the Israeli actions in Gaza with the Israel government in any official way," Barnes said.

Then eight months later, Barnes added more in a special report to the Foreign Office on Gaza. In it he said the Israelis "exposed themselves to criticism they are riding roughshod over the legal proprieties and creating facts". Barnes viewed the issue of moving Gazans to Egypt as "a typical piece of insensitivity to international opinion".

The Israelis responded to the British government in September 1971 admitting that they had plotted a secret scheme to send Palestinians from Gaza to other areas, most notably El-Arish in northern Egypt.

The future Israeli premier Shimon Peres, who was then the Israeli Minister of Transport and Communications, told the Polit-

ical Counsellor at a meeting the British Embassy in Tel Aviv that "it is time for Israel to do more in the Gaza Strip and less in the West Bank".

Peres said a ministerial committee was reviewing the situation in Gaza. He added that the recommendations of the committee "will not be published nor would there be any dramatic announcement of new policy" confirming that there was "agreement in the Cabinet on a fresh and long-term approach to the refugee problem" in Gaza. He pointed out that Egypt's El-Arish was a part of Israel's "new policy". He claimed the affected refugees had also been content to "accept high-quality apartments built by the Egyptians in El Arish, where they can have semi-permanent residence".

The secret Israeli plan "will lead to a change in the situation within a year or so" he said while reminding the attendees at the meeting about the total secrecy surrounding the Israelis' expansionist policy.

Peres insisted that any talk about the Israeli plan to move Palestinians out of their land "will only feed ammunition to Israel's enemies". When Peres was asked how "many people will be transferred to restore peace and viability to Gaza" he said "about a third of the camp population will be resettled elsewhere in the Strip or outside it". At the meeting, Peres emphasised Tel Aviv's belief that "there is a need to perhaps reduce the total population by about 100,000 people".

The British diplomat conveyed the Israeli plan to London, claiming that "most of those affected are, in fact, content to find themselves better alternative housing with the compensation they received when their huts were removed".

Then in a separate assessment the British diplomat noted that the Israelis believed that any permanent solution to the problems of the Gaza Strip "must include the rehabilitation of part of the population outside its present borders".

Israeli policy, he explained, included resettling Palestinians in the northern Sinai peninsula of Egypt. He said "the Israeli government risks facing criticism but the practical results are more important" for the Israelis.

In London the Head of the

Near East Department at the Foreign Office, ME Pike, reported that "drastic measures are now being taken to reduce the size of the refugee camps and open them up. This means forcibly removing refugees from their current homes, or rather their huts, to be more precise, and evacuating them to El Arish in Egyptian territory...a more ambitious resettlement programme now appears to be underway."

In an official meeting a month later the Israelis informed a number of foreign embassy officials of additional details about the plan to move Palestinians out of Gaza.

In this meeting, Israeli Brigadier-General Shlomo Gazit, co-ordinator of Activities in the Administrated (Occupied) Territories, claimed to embassy officials that the Israelis did not destroy Palestinian homes in Gaza "unless there is alternative housing", adding that the demolitions that were carried out were "limited by the amount of alternative accommodation available within Gaza, including El Arish".

Gazit said 700 of the Palestinian families whose homes were destroyed by the Israelis in Gaza had found alternative accommodation through their own efforts. "The remainder has been rehoused either within the Gaza Strip or in El Arish."

The RAF attaché present at the meeting, Colonel Harwood, said Gazit explained that "the houses in El Arish were chosen because it was the only place with a readily available supply of empty houses in a good state of repair".

In response to a question raised about the accommodations, Gazit responded that the available houses "were previously owned by Egyptian officers".

This situation seemed at odds, from the British point of view, with three principles that had been announced by General Moshe Dayan, the Israeli War Minister, for administering the occupied territories after the 1967 war. These principles were: a minimum military presence, a minimum of interference in normal civilian life, and a maximum of contact or open bridges with Israel and the rest of the Arab world.

Ambassador Barnes, in a comprehensive report, warned

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that his information indicated that UNRWA “anticipates that Israel will resort to the deportation solution”, pointing that the agency “understands the Israeli security problem” but “cannot agree to the forced transfer of refugees from their homes, nor to their evacuation even on a temporary basis to El Arish in Egypt”.

In its assessment of the Israeli scheme, the Foreign Office warned that “whatever the Israeli justifications for this far-reaching policy, we cannot help but feel that the Israelis underestimate the extent of the anger that this [Israeli] doctrine of creating facts on the ground will arouse in the Arab world and at the United Nations”.

Needless to say, the USA and the UK declined to tell the Egyptians about the Israeli plan to move Palestinians to El-Arish.

Radio Havana Cuba

Brian Haw remembered

by New Worker correspondent

A bronze statuette of Brian Haw the peace campaigner was unveiled at the Imperial War Museum in London last weekend. Brian Haw camped out in Parliament Square for over 10 years in protest against Anglo-American aggression in Iraq and imperialist wars throughout the rest of the world. Despite the best efforts of the police to hound him out Brian maintained his vigil until ill-health forced him to leave shortly before his death in 2011.

Brian Haw was a little-known

evangelical Christian, motivated by the pacifist teachings of Jesus of Nazareth that are often ignored by many of those who profess to believe in him, who travelled to northern Ireland and Cambodia to preach “love, peace and justice for all” in the 1970s and ‘80s. But he hit the headlines with his one-man protest against the imperialist aggression against Iraq.

He set up his tent opposite the so-called “Mother of Parliaments” in June 2001 to protest against the cruel imperialist blockade against Iraq that preceded the invasion and occupation by Anglo-American imperialism in 2003.

Brian was never short of company. Peace campaigners made a point of visiting his tent in the heart of London to help or spend some time in solidarity with the protest, which grew as Haw decorated the square with his home-made posters and peace banners condemning the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. This rapidly became an alternative London tourist attraction. But it was also an embarrassment to the Establishment and it soon attracted the unwelcome attention of the police.

For over 10 years Haw main-

tained his round-the-clock vigil, braving all weathers and violent attacks from thugs and the police. He defied all threats to evict him, including an abortive new law to restrict demonstrations within half-a-mile of Parliament. In 2006 the police succeeded in obtaining authority to remove and confiscate Brian’s entire display. Fortunately the 40-metre-long display was entirely recreated by the artist Mark Wallinger, who won the 2007 Turner Prize for his exact replica of the encampment, entitled *State Britain*, which was exhibited in the Tate Modern art gallery. And supporters and friends maintained the protest tent when ill-health forced Haw to seek treatment for cancer in Germany paid out of a fund raised by British peace campaigners.

In February 2023 a group of supporters and friends launched a campaign to create a permanent public reminder of Brian Haw’s crusade for peace that raised the £25,000 needed to create the monument.

The ceremony was attended by three of his children while the famed actor, Sir Mark Rylance, paid tribute to Brian’s “bright sense of conscience”. The actor,

who is a patron of the Stop the War movement, said “His great call was to stop killing the children...no matter what conflict we have as adults, they didn’t create that conflict and we should find a peaceful way of resolving the conflict”. And, appropriately enough, the words “Stop killing the kids” are inscribed underneath his likeness.

Roger Waters condemns arrest of Peruvian leader

Roger Waters has condemned the imprisonment of Peruvian leader Pedro Castillo in a public show of support for the fight to free the man who held the presidency of Peru from July 2021 to December 2022.

The legendary Pink Floyd frontman vowed that he will thoroughly investigate what happened in the case and expressed solidarity with the former Peruvian president, who is in a stable condition after suffering mild dehydration due to a hunger strike.

In a message posted on digital platforms the co-founder of the Pink Floyd rock band expressed his concern about the current condition of Pedro Castillo, as well as the international neglect of the plight of the politician who is being held in Barbadillo Prison while facing trial for alleged rebellion and abuse of authority.

Waters said the economic interests of powerful groups in Peru had stripped the indigenous union leader of his presidency and imprisoned him. He stated that Castillo’s voice is unlikely

to be heard in Peru, which is why the former president went on hunger strike.

He stated that he will launch a thorough investigation to find out everything he can and overcome the Western media’s portrayal of the case. He also called on those concerned about human rights and the indigenous peoples of Peru, whom Castillo represented in the executive branch, to join the effort to clarify the facts.

Roger Waters highlighted the fact that a leftist, Indigenous union leader was elected to the executive branch “in an extremely right-wing country, where almost all power is in the hands of the richest”. At the same time, he noted that his term didn’t last long because Castillo attempted to reorganise Congress and was removed from office in December 2022, “since when he has languished in prison”.

The Peruvian Prosecutor’s Office is currently seeking 34 years in prison, a three-year and six-month ban from office and civil damages of approximately \$17 million, for the former president. He is the victim of a judicial war waged against him. When he took office the oligarchs moved to prevent him from advancing measures that favoured the people at their expense.

Faced with obstacles from the Peruvian Congress to implement measures of popular interest, Castillo attempted to dissolve the legislative body on 7th December 2022. Consequently, legislators removed him from office and swore in then-Vice President Dina Boluarte as the new president.

Radio Havana Cuba



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

18th March 2005

A US federal court has dismissed legal action by Vietnamese plaintiffs who alleged that Agent Orange caused birth defects and illnesses. The judge in the case ruled that allegations of physical damage were not proven and rejected their arguments.

Nguyen Trong Nhan, a leader of the Vietnamese Agent Orange Association, said that Judge Jack B Weinstein’s decision was “wrong, unfair and irresponsible”. He said that his group was thinking of filing an appeal.

Judge Weinstein ruled that there was “no basis for any of the claims of plaintiffs under the domestic law of any nation or state or under any form of international law” – dismissing the case outright.

The plaintiffs had sought compensation from pharmaceutical firms including Monsanto, Dow Chemical and Hercules Incorporated, for the effects of Agent Orange, a toxic defoliant used to deprive guerilla forces of food and forest cover.

They argued that the chemical caused birth defects, miscarriages and cancer, and was the first civil action by Vietnamese plaintiffs to claim compensation for the effects of Agent Orange.

Attorneys said that a legal precedent was set in the action when several chemical companies paid \$180 million to settle a lawsuit in 1984 with US war veterans who claimed their health had been affected by exposure to the substance. The chemical companies had settled out of court just before jury

selection was to begin. The companies agreed to pay if US veterans dropped all claims against them. Many veterans were outraged the case not going to court.

Ngo Thanh Nhan, a professor who participated in a campaign to drum up support for the case, said this fuelled the Vietnamese plaintiffs’ argument. He said if the medical files of the Vietnamese victims are not convincing enough for the court, then they will use the ones of US soldiers – arguing that there is no reason why those who sprayed chemical products received compensation for their contamination and the direct victims’ lawsuit was rejected.

Agent Orange, which was named after the colour of the containers, contained dioxin that stripped trees bare – but also entered the food chain and caused a proliferation of birth defects. Some babies were born without eyes or arms or were missing internal organs. Activists say three million people were exposed to the chemical during the war and that at least one million suffer serious health problems today.

Cybernetics: How big data is building socialism in China

by Taylor Dorrell

In China's countryside, it is common to find elderly farmers moving from their ancient homes to new developments sprouting up across the land. Houses discovered to be in the path of disasters such as floods and landslides, or houses that are simply too old, are being left for new flats closer to industrial or post-industrial jobs.

When Peng Lanhua's 200-year-old home was designated unsafe to live in by the government, she turned down the opportunity to move to a new community an hour away and instead, despite her age, or perhaps because of it (she's approaching 90 and has seen China transformed from being a feudal state occupied by Japan to becoming an economic superpower), she chose to stay in the dilapidated structure.

Were Peng born in a crumbling shack in West Virginia, she might find herself with few prospects. Living with Alzheimer's on a modest pension and low-income insurance, there would be little hope of fixing up her home, securing basic amenities, and improving her material conditions in her final years.

There is no government or party cadre visiting every trailer home in West Virginia villages to learn how the state and private markets can be mobilised to secure a minimum standard of living. There is no team following up to verify the conditions and see who has been raised out of poverty. However, Peng doesn't live in the USA, but rather a remote village in Guizhou province, a place that has been a part of China's poverty alleviation programme and was the subject of a recent study carried out by the international left-wing institute: the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research.

In 2013, People's China



• A Communist Party cadre helping an elderly villager in the Miao Autonomous Prefecture.

began the "targeted" phase of its long-running poverty alleviation programme. Spending \$246 billion to build almost 700,000 miles of rural roads, bringing the internet to 98 per cent of the country's poor villages, renovating homes for more than 26 million people, and building new homes for almost 10 million people, China's Targeted Poverty Alleviation (TPA) programme is not tailored solely towards satisfying strict income requirements and quantitative improvements.

Following the slogan "one

income, two assurances and three guarantees", the programme addresses what's called Multidimensional Poverty. "One income" refers to raising the daily income above the UN poverty line of \$1.90; "two assurances" refers to food and clothing; and "three guarantees" is in reference to access to basic medical services, safe housing with clean drinking water and electricity, and free education.

In 2014, nearly three million cadres of the Communist Party of China were sent throughout the country as part

of the programme. There were 800,000 tasked with surveying every household, while another two million were tasked with verifying data, removing inaccurate case information and adding new enrollees.

One cadre was assigned to live in every village to learn which families were going in and out of Multidimensional Poverty and why. Peng was one of the people helped by the programme. Her home originally had a mud floor without a toilet or shower, but thanks to TPA she now she has a concrete floor, an extension

with a shower, toilet and solar heated water, and is provided free internet and TV.

By 2021, the government announced that the almost 100 million people who had remained in extreme poverty in 2013 – making up 832 counties and 128,000 villages – had now been raised out of absolute poverty.

Wang Sangui, dean of the National Poverty Alleviation Research Institute of Renmin University, says that tracking the alleviation of even one part of what's called Multidimensional Poverty requires an extensive amount of data and mobilisation from multiple sources. The first question to be answered is who among the country's 1.4 billion people lives in absolute poverty. Attention then turns to how each of them is to be raised out of poverty. Finally, there is the task of tracking all of these efforts and accounting for their results.

Even just one performance indicator – access to safe drinking water – has multiple data points and factors that must be surveyed and tracked to ensure success in service provision.

"How do you classify drinking water as safe? First, the basic requirement is that there must be no shortages in water supply. Second, the source of water must not be too far, no more than 20 minutes round-trip for water retrieval. Last, the water quality must be safe, without any harmful substances. We require test reports that confirm the water quality is safe. Only then can we say that the standard is met," Wang said.

In Guizhou province, Peng is just one individual living as one does at her age; her daughter and son-in-law live next door in a home built with government subsidies, and her children are all employed. Liu Yuanxue, the Party cadre for



• The new life in Guizhou province.

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Peng's village, checks in on Peng and other villagers once a month to see how they're doing financially and personally. These Party cadre are physically there and connected to the happenings and conditions of the village to provide accurate data on the villages and coordinate assistance based on needs.

But at the Information Centre of the State Council Office of Poverty Alleviation, Peng is a name, one of millions, in a network database spanning 30 million poor households in China. The billions of pieces of data associated with them are mobilised like ammunition to wage a decentralised war against poverty. In other words, cybernetics is being used to abolish poverty in China.

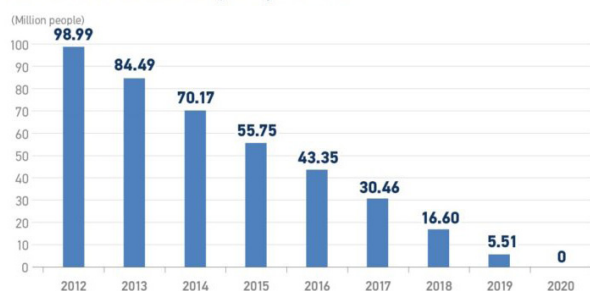
Cybernetics and socialism

Cybernetics is not as complicated as it sounds. It's primarily a science, one that stresses communication and automated control systems. This takes place in both nature and man-made realms, whether it's a colony of ants who rotate out inactive reserves of worker ants for deceased ones or a large supermarket adjusting toilet paper supply based on updated demand. Cybernetics is an attempt to rationally plan and adjust based on a network of data.

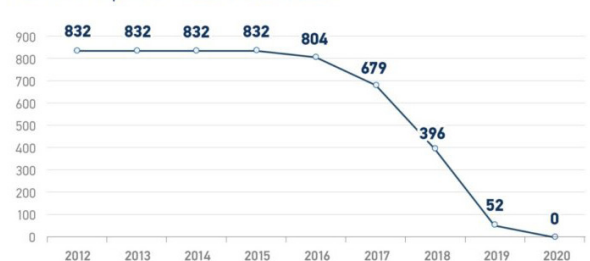
The first time cybernetics was consciously used in the technology-age in service of socialism was in the Soviet Union with a programme called the All-State Automated System, or OGAS by its Russian initials. The programme attempted to establish a

China's road to eliminating extreme poverty

Number of rural residents in poverty 2012-2020



Number of impoverished counties 2012-2020



Source: Poverty Alleviation: China's Experience and Contribution released by China's State Council Information Office in April 2021

CGTN

nationwide network of computers to generate a completely up-to-date overview of the Soviet Union's economy to create a more robust system of resource allocation and production planning. The programme, essentially an early attempt at creating an internet, was only implemented at local levels and unfortunately never received funding for a nationwide system.

The Soviet attempt

at establishing a national cybernetic network is often overshadowed by Chile's attempt and brief success under the three-year administration of Salvador Allende, in which the Cybersyn programme connected 500 telex machines to one IBM computer. The system was tested when the CIA bribed the country's truckers to go on strike in 1972. Cybersyn updated the central operations room on what

factories were blocked-off by striking truckers so that a modest number of supportive truckers could keep the country running, averting an economic disaster.

But a CIA-backed coup in 1973 led to the dismantlement of the programme and the destruction of the operations room. Those involved with Cybersyn, such as the British cybernetics pioneer Stafford Beer, were left without any socialist countries who wanted to use their cybernetic ideas. They were forced to turn to the private sector, to use cybernetics to increase private profits.

In the book *The People's Republic of Walmart*, authors Leigh Phillips and Michal Rozworski argue that the private sector has developed the technology required to efficiently run a country's economy in service of distributing goods more equally as opposed to maximising profits. "If only Walmart's operational efficiency, its logistical genius, its architecture of agile economic planning could be captured and

transformed by those who aim toward a more egalitarian, liberatory society!" they say.

But the authors simultaneously oppose the principles of a planned economy and the reform period in China, opting instead for what they call "democratic planning", a utopian ideal that might have more in common with China's socialist cybernetics than the authors would like to admit.

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics

Cybernetics is a field that is split. It's claimed by both capitalists and socialists – some accused the USSR of trying to compete with the USA with their OGAS programme while others accuse Western capitalist countries of stealing Allende's socialist Cybersyn programme. Cybernetics is claimed and used by all sides. But in China, cybernetics is

used both to secure more efficient production for private profits and to benefit the masses who produce the profits.

Cybernetics with Chinese Characteristics shamelessly uses cybernetics. While it might be used to maximise private profits for some companies now, it is also laying the groundwork for the gradual construction of an efficient socialism. If deployed even more widely – as it has been already to alleviate the poverty of Peng Lanhua and millions of others – it could revolutionise global political economy.

How is it possible to prop up both private markets and socialist development? To understand Cybernetics with Chinese Characteristics, one first has to understand Socialism with Chinese Characteristics.

Australian Marxist academic Roland Boer argues that Western understandings of socialism are often limited to the simple definition of common ownership of the means of production. This emphasis on nationalisation is rooted in Marx's expectation that highly-industrialised capitalist nations would be the first to have socialist revolutions. He assumed there would be a mass industrial base to start with. But, as we now know, Communist-led working-class revolutions have not yet succeeded in industrialised Western European countries; instead, they've taken place in countries where the majority of the population were rural farmers or peasants.

"Proletarian revolutions have been successful overwhelmingly in places that had undeveloped productive forces," says Boer, "so one finds that there is greater attention to liberating productive forces." In



• Bringing in the harvest!

other words, for there to be common ownership of the means of production, there needs to be a means of production to begin with.

And so, you find Communist-led governments such as that in the USSR in the 1920s going through Lenin's New Economic Policy, where private markets were encouraged in order to grow industry, or China under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping, who argued that "the fundamental [task] is to develop the productive forces so as to demonstrate the superiority of socialism over capitalism and provide the material basis for communism." (It should be emphasised that while China has a private sector, state-owned enterprises [SOEs] dominate with 70 per cent of China's *Fortune 500* companies being SOEs.)

It might sound antithetical for a Communist Party to grow capitalism in order to build socialism, but this is an essential step for some developing countries to build socialism. This was talked about by Engels even before the *Communist Manifesto*. He wrote in the *Principles of Communism* (1847): "In all probability, the proletarian revolution will transform existing society gradually and will be able to abolish private property only when the means of production are available in sufficient quantity."

It's therefore not surprising that big data and technology would be developed under private corporations and then be taken and used to help build socialism. Socialism was always a project that had to be built on top of capitalist means of production, an historical stage that follows capitalism. Cybernetics is just one tool used in a prolonged his-

torical struggle to bring about the next stage of economic development.

Cybernetics with Chinese Characteristics

In the 2021 documentary *China's War on Poverty*, film-maker Robert Lawrence Kuhn gives a first-hand view of how poverty is being addressed. Kuhn visits the Information Centre of the State Council Office of Poverty Alleviation, where all of the data is put on display through a map of poverty across the country.

"The information keeps changing," says Lu Chunsheng, the director of the Information Centre, "some are lifted out of poverty, while others are newly classified as impoverished." He zooms in on Hainan province, an island that is bright red on the map where, in 2015, there were 26,000 households living in poverty. By the end of 2016, that number was reduced to 25,000 and by 2020, China succeeded in eradicating absolute poverty from the island. (The documentary was pulled by PBS, the American public broadcasting service, for "editorial" concerns,



• President Xi Jinping visits an autonomous region in Guizhou province.

but Kuhn said it was because of "extraneous internal political matters in the United States".)

China's poverty alleviation programme is a mixture of centralised data and decentralised implementation. In the 2021 study *Chinese Poverty Alleviation Studies: A Political Economy Perspective*, the New China Research think-tank (NCR) says that the programme can be summarised by the "5Ds": "Determined Leadership, Detailed Blueprint, Development-Oriented, Data-based Governance, and Decentralised Delivery." Since 2015, China decentralised the approval authority for poverty alleviation funds so that local governments can allocate resources

based on specific needs of the community. Local cadres who live within the villages directly ask local governments for funds to help the community or even for funds to help individual households. This methodology devolves authority and democratises resource allocation while using big data to track, analyse and verify the effectiveness of the efforts.

Prior to the 2013 campaign, poverty data was general and elusive. China's statistical departments could track overall trends but had no way of targeting the poverty status of specific individuals. In 2014, the then State Council Leading Group Office of Poverty Alleviation and Development creat-

ed the ambitious cadre mobilisation programme to register every individual in poverty. In 2015, two million people were tasked with verifying the data they collected.

Over nine million cases were labelled as inaccurately identified and eight million new cases were added. All individuals identified as being in poverty had their data split into nine parts: "Basic information, evaluation and identification, causes of poverty, assistance plans, income and expenditures, policies and guarantees received, inspection and acceptance for poverty elimination, relevant agreements, and consolidation and improvement."

"Based on the family archives," the NCR study says, "the country has for the first time established a unified national poverty alleviation information and management system that covers nearly 100 million people and is regularly updated." Thanks to this data, China is able to identify the root causes of poverty. The government found that 42 per cent of poverty cases were due to illness, 20 per cent to disaster, and 10 per cent to school-related expenses.

The remainder fell into a variety of other categories.

In the province of Guizhou, the government established the Guizhou Poverty Alleviation Cloud information system, which connected data from different government departments, sharing housing, education and medical-care data with industrial departments and data from poor households. Guizhou Renhe Zhiyuan Data Service Co Ltd collected data from over 20,000 villages to create a customised training programme for workers based on skills and employment. It's just a small example of how cybernetics has been used to address poverty.

While China might not have a country-wide Cybersyn programme to track the entire economy like Chile developed, they have nonetheless channelled cybernetics in their own unique way as part of the war on poverty. Using big data and modelling, China has been able to track and eradicate absolute poverty, a feat never taken on, not to mention achieved, by any country in history.

If there's one thing Cybernetics with Chinese Characteristics has taught us about socialist cybernetics, however, it's that digital data can only do so much. The real work is carried out by the people on the ground – in this case, by those cadres who went door-to-door collecting data and living in the villages among the people. The magic is in the democratic decentralised implementation of the poverty alleviation programme. "Bottom-up improvisation," NCR says, "has been the driver of China's escape from the poverty trap."

People's World
(USA)



• Celebrating the harvest in the countryside

LETTERS

Dear Comrades

The Palestinian Communist Party condemns in the strongest terms the brutal American-British aggression against brotherly Yemen, which constitutes a continuation of the hegemonic and colonisation approach practised by world imperialism against free peoples eager for independence and sovereignty. The aerial and naval bombardment targeting Yemen under the pretext of protecting maritime navigation in the Red Sea cannot be justified in any way and is a flagrant violation of Yemen's sovereignty and the rights of its people to self-determination away from external interference.

This aggression comes in the context of the imperialist Powers' direct support for the Zionist entity in its brutal aggression against our Palestinian people in Gaza, where the Zionist occupation continues its criminal siege on the Gaza Strip, in an attempt to bring the resistance to its knees and break the will of our steadfast people. Targeting Yemen today is nothing but an imperialist response to its honourable position in the face of this blockade and its support for the Palestinian cause by closing shipping in the Red Sea as a means of pressuring the forces supporting the occupation.

We in the Palestinian Communist Party affirm our full solidarity with the Yemeni people in the face of this blatant aggression, and we call on the progressive and revolutionary forces in the world to condemn this new crime,

which comes in the context of the consolidation of the occupation and imperialist domination over the destinies of peoples. We also warn of the dangerous repercussions of this military escalation on the stability of the entire region and hold the aggressor forces fully responsible for the outcome of this aggression and the decisive and definite response that will follow against the American and British forces in the region.

The steadfastness of free peoples in the face of imperialist arrogance will remain the most powerful weapon in the battle for national and social liberation, and we believe that the will of the peoples is stronger than any colonial war machine.

Glory and eternity to the martyrs... Speedy recovery for the wounded... Victory for the resistance... and defeat for imperialism and its agents.

Palestinian Communist Party

Dear Comrades

Europe is in a state of confusion and uncertainty. Many of its so-called leaders are running around in circles, in a state of panic and denial of the catastrophic effects of their actions. A combination of greed, incompetence and arrogance have contributed to a crisis, the likes of which I have never witnessed before. The EU and the whole Brussels bureaucracy could be swept aside as citizens awaken to the reality of economic failure, democratic collapse and the threat of never-ending

war.

Project Ukraine was undoubtedly planned, financed and initiated by the imperialist coup in 2014. It has been a total and tragic failure. The Russian Federation's Special Military Operation was a direct response to both the shelling by the Kiev regime that resulted in 8,000 civilian deaths in Donbas up to 2022 and also Imperialism's ambition to expand NATO up to Russia's south-western border region. The harsh sanctions against Russia have backfired spectacularly with lost markets for European goods, severely disrupted supply chains and astronomical energy costs. European governments continue to pour weapons and money (our money) into Ukraine in an attempt to keep the war going without any talk of peace or diplomatic effort. In doing so they have accelerated their self-inflicted economic collapse and risked pushing us all into WW3.

Hypocritical Western politicians claim to lead the "free world" through their democratic institutions and self-proclaimed liberal values of tolerance and justice. However, as states and peoples start to question and oppose EU diktats we can see the reality of this load of old cobblers. In Romania the presidential candidate and front-runner, Calin Georgescu, who had been leading in a cancelled election was arrested as he was on his way to register his candidacy in new elections. Little has changed in Romania since President Nicolae Ceauşescu and his wife were shot by firing squad (many would say murdered) on Christmas Day 1989. We have seen an assassination attempt on Slovakia's Prime Minister, Robert Fico, who was a strong critic of Kiev. In a number of states, the EU supports and encourag-

es "colour revolutions" in an attempt to overturn their democratically elected governments. And in France the universally unpopular, russophobic little napoleon, Macron, works tirelessly to keep the war going.

Much of the successful opposition to the neo-con policies of the European establishment has come from right-wing parties. Where is the Left?

The time is long overdue for a resurgence of the communist movement in Europe. Marxism Leninism must play a role in inspiring the people to struggle for peace, make economic progress and bring real freedom. We must campaign for a return of the People's Democracies that once existed in Eastern Europe.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Dear Comrades

The online website 'Equal Times' published an article entitled *What can international solidarity do for migrant workers' rights in Saudi Arabia?* on 18th March. It said: "Behind Saudi Arabia's large-scale projects aimed at polishing its image in the eyes of the international community, be it the Asian Cup of Nations in 2027, the Asian Winter Games in 2029, the FIFA World Cup in 2034 or the NEOM futuristic city project, lies a much bleaker reality: thousands of migrant workers in the country are victims of human rights violations and unrelenting discrimination.

"It is up to the workers to unite before it is too late. As long as the workers abroad can complain, write letters, join a union... they must do so, and not remain silent," says Lina al-Hathloul, head of monitoring and advocacy for ALQST, a not-for-profit organisation defending human rights in Saudi Arabia.

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

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

UNTIL 25 ARIL
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.

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

SAT 22 MAR
CND 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.

SAT 22 MAR
Banner Theatre performance: *Battle Lines*. 40th anniversary of the miners' strike. 19:00 Theatre Porto, Whitby Hall, Ellesmere Port CH65.

SUN 23 MAR
Scottish Morning Star Supporters Spring Conference. Gentrification, opposing Reform and funding local services. 12:00–16:00, Scottish TUC, 8 Landressy Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow G40 1BP. CONFIRMED. Book on Eventbrite.

TUE 25 MAR
Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Cuba and Palestine Together. 19:00, Coventry Friends Meeting House, Hill Street, Coventry CV1 4AN.

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 conference. 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.

MON 31 MAR
Korean Friendship Association: Film Night. Showing of *72 Hours* 19:00–20:30. Register at juche007@gmail.com

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

SAT 5 APRIL
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Don't Buy Apartheid. Protests outside supermarkets selling Israeli-associated products. See PSC website for nationwide events details.

SAT 5 APRIL
British Group for the Study of the Juche Idea and Korean Friendship Association: 113th anniversary of the birth of the great leader President Kim Il Sung and the 43rd anniversary of the publication of *On The Juche Idea*. 2pm, Chadswell Centre, Harrison Street, London WC1H 8JF.

SAT 5–THUR 24 APRIL
Serpentine Gallery: *The British East India Company on Trial*. Ambika P3, 35 Marylebone Rd, London NW1 5LS. Book on the gallery's website.

MON 7 APRIL
Global Justice Now: Tzeporah Berman of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative. 18:30–20:00, Kennington Park Community Centre, London SE11 5SY. Book on GJN 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 STUC websites for other events to 5 May.

THUR 3 APRIL
Socialist History Society: Hugh Davie on The Organisation of the Soviet Army in the Second World War. 14:00, Marx Memorial Library.

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

SAT 7 JUNE
Peoples Assembly Against Austerity: March and Rally, Central London. Details TBA.

CONTACT US...

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

Former Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon bowed out of politics this week, announcing that she was standing down from Holyrood at the next election in favour of exploring “different opportunities in a new chapter” of life. The MSP for Glasgow Southside said that it was “far from easy” to make the decision to step down. But others believe her departure was inevitable given the scandals of the past two years that include being briefly held by the police during a police probe into SNP finances and the investigation into the actions of her

estranged husband, Peter Murrell, who was later charged with embezzling party funds.

Her successor, John Swinney, said he was “very sorry” that she was standing down at the next Scottish parliamentary election. “Whilst I have many disagreements with her, I never doubted her passion for Glasgow and Scotland. I wish her well for the future” he said. But she was damned with faint praise by Scottish Liberal Democrat leader Alex Cole-Hamilton MSP, who said: “Whatever you think of her legacy, Nicola Sturgeon’s impact on Scottish politics has been undeniable.” He then added that: “The SNP have been in power for too long, and the departure of another big figure is further proof of their decline. For so many people across Scotland, it feels like nothing works anymore. Next year, they will have a chance to draw a line under SNP division and neglect. At the 2026 election, Scottish Liberal Democrats will be focused on standing up for faster access to local healthcare, lifting up education and giving our economy the attention it deserves.”

This was echoed by Scottish Conservative deputy leader Rachael Hamilton, who said: “We wish any departing MSP well, regardless of their party or politics. but we cannot forget the deep divisions in our country that Nicola Sturgeon created, fostered and encouraged.”

Even though Nicola Sturgeon will face no charges as part of the long-running police investigation into SNP finances, controversy still surrounds her nine years in office.

While she, doubtless, can look forward to a second-life as a media

pundit on a new platform provided by her autobiography, which will be out in August, her resignation does the SNP no harm and indeed some will have welcomed her departure from the political scene. The same cannot be said for...

...Neil Findlay

...who stormed out of the Labour Party last week in protest at the national Labour government’s benefit cuts that he said were “punishing the vulnerable”. Neil Findlay accused the UK Government of trying to “punish and stigmatise the weak, poor and the vulnerable”. In a scathing letter to Sir Keir Starmer, the former Lothian MSP warned “MPs who continue to support your agenda are turkeys voting for Christmas”. The Scottish Corbynista who condemned the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and the failure to compensate WASPI women hit by state pension changes said he could no longer remain a member of a party that “lied to the British people at the last election and with regularity betrays the people who voted for it”.

Findlay may be a maverick whose political career is largely over, but Starmer’s benefit cuts have touched on a raw nerve here. Scottish TUC General Secretary Roz Foyer said: “These are reforms that could well have been delivered with a blue rosette. Actively making it harder for people who cannot work and who need support is not the change that was promised during the election. It’s a short-sighted, reactionary decision that will negatively impact on the Scottish Government’s Budget. This is the wrong choice at any time but to do so when food, energy, utilities and housing costs are still eye-wateringly high, the government is risking throwing more people into completely avoidable destitution. You don’t need to cut the support system to those with the least when you can cut the profits of those with the most.

“The UK Government had a choice. They could have targeted those with wealth, assets and property, taxing and then redistributing the revenue. They’ve chosen instead to punch down – something we cannot support.”

...continued from page 8

Forced displacements, expropriation of Indigenous land, deadly working conditions, death sentences for those who resist, the abuses linked to these monumental construction projects are regularly denounced, all over the world, by NGOs and workers’ organisations, which also criticise the carte blanche given to the Saudi kingdom by some of the world’s leaders.

John Hughes
Bahrain Freedom Movement
London

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

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The Eternal Thoughts of Karl Marx

by New Worker
correspondent

Communists and friends gathered at a reception at the NCP Party Centre in London last weekend to remember the life and times of a great revolutionary thinker. Karl Marx died in London on 14th March 1883, but his memory lives on in his works, and those of his life-long comrade Frederick Engels, which are the foundation stones of scientific socialism.

MCed by Richard Bos in the *New Worker* print shop, guests paused for the formal part of the social to hear a number of speakers



• Andy Brooks pays tribute to Karl Marx.

pay tribute to the immense contribution that Marx and

Engels made in the struggle for the emancipation of the

working class. They included Pablo Ginarte from

the Cuban embassy, Theo Russell from the Interna-

tional Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity campaign, Dermot Hudson from the Korean Friendship Association, and an Italian comrade. Marx's immense contribution to socialist thinking that we now call Marxism-Leninism can never be forgotten said Andy Brooks, the NCP leader, sentiments echoed by Ian Donovan from the Consistent Democrats group and Marie Lynam from the British Posadists.

Traditionally no NCP event can ever end without a collection for the *New Worker* fighting fund and comrades rose to the occasion by raising £566 for our communist weekly.

Red Salute to Karl Marx in Highgate

by Theo Russell

London communists joined other comrades and friends, including the ambassadors of People's China, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos and Sri Lanka, to mark the death of Karl Marx at his graveside last Sunday. Marx died in London on 14th March 1883 and was buried in Highgate Cemetery three days later.

Speeches in Marx's honour were delivered at his tomb by the Cuban ambassador Ismara Vargas Walter and by Dr Ashok Dhawali, an Indian peasant leader and a member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of India (M).

Ismara Vargas Walter said the event was "not only to honour Karl Marx's memory but to reaffirm our commitment to the ideas that ignited the Cuban Revolution and continue to guide our struggle for justice, sovereignty and

socialism".

In Cuba "our youth learn Marxism not as dogma but as a tool for critical thinking" and that the answers to the problems of globalised technology, climate change and a US-dominated world order "lie in Marx's emphasis on collective action and socialist planning.

"The digital age has brought new forms of exploitation, platform capitalism, algorithmic oppression and the commodification of human attention, but it has also created new avenues for resistance, for mobilising, for spreading revolutionary consciousness. Our task is to harness these tools for the people, not for profit.

"Cuba stands with Palestine, Venezuela and Nicaragua against genocide and US 'criminal unilateral coercive measures', and all nations resisting imperialism."

Dr Ashok Dhawali, the president of the All-India



• Ismara Vargas Walter and Dr Ashok Dhawali at Marx's tomb.

Farmers Union, said that Marx's thinking is still relevant today in a world

in which "since 2020, the richest one per cent have grabbed nearly 67 per cent

of all new wealth... billionaire fortunes rise by \$2.7 billion a day...and

46 per cent of the world's population live under the global poverty line."

The Indian communist said the entire imperialist camp backed the "Zionist genocide by Israel against the courageous people of Gaza" while "the socialist countries like Cuba, China, Vietnam, Laos, DPRK and the left-led countries of Latin America and Sri Lanka... are boldly opposing imperialism and Zionism".

He also recalled the historic year-long struggle by millions of farmers that led to the repeal of three anti-farmer laws in 2020-21 and said that a massive general strike was planned in April against four proposed new pro-corporate labour codes in India.

The gathering ended with the laying of flowers by the ambassadors and representatives of political parties, including a delegation from the New Communist Party, and the singing of *The Internationale*.

Imperialist violence unleashes ethnic cleansing

by Owen Schalk

Since the beginning of March, hundreds of Syrian Alawi Muslims have been massacred in ethnic pogroms perpetrated by the forces of the new regime under the Sunni Islamist rule of Hay'at-Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The leader of HTS, ISIS veteran Ahmed al-Sharaa (al-Julani), has governed Syria as an unelected dictator since riding on Turkish military support to seize power in December 2024.

Israel immediately took advantage of the Ba'ath Party's demise three months ago, invading and bombing Syria and vowing to "demilitarise" territory south of Damascus. Al-Sharaa has not fought back. While allowing Israel free rein in southern Syria, the new president repealed the constitution and dissolved left-wing political parties that could have served as an opposition to his reactionary agenda. In the meantime, HTS forces are rampaging through the country, targeting ethnic and religious minorities and anyone else who runs afoul of their violently discriminatory beliefs.

Most recently, HTS launched pogroms against the Alawi minority in Syria's coastal region. These sectarian killings have left over 1,000 people dead. Al-Sharaa's forces have massacred hundreds of Alawis, looting and burning their homes and leaving corpses piled in the streets. The government has blamed this



mass ethnic violence on "individual actions" of HTS members, but the scale of the pogroms invalidates the 'bad egg' claims emanating from Damascus.

According to the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, government forces have killed at least 745 Alawi civilians in "executions" carried out in the coastal region and the Latakia mountains. Witnesses speak of HTS militants shooting Alawis in the streets and at the gates of their homes.

France 24 reports: "Residents of Baniyas, one of the towns worst hit by the violence, said bodies were strewn on the streets or left unburied in homes and on the roofs of buildings, and nobody was able to collect them. One resident said that the gunmen prevented residents for hours from removing the bodies of five of their neighbours killed Friday at close range."

Hundreds of Alawi Syrians fleeing HTS massacres have sought

refuge at Russia's Hmeimim Airbase in Latakia. Rami Abdu-rrahman, chief of the Syrian Observatory of Human Rights, said "this was one of the biggest massacres during the Syrian conflict".

The ethnic violence perpetrated by al-Sharaa's forces is horrific to behold, but it is not surprising. Hatred of Alawis runs deep among anti-Assad forces. In 2014, Islamist rebels massacred dozens in the Alawi village of Maan. In 2015, Syrian rebels locked Alawis in cages and paraded them through the streets of a rebel-controlled suburb of Damascus. The next year, anti-Assad forces committed another massacre of Alawis in Zara'a.

One can draw a grim parallel between the HTS government's anti-Alawi pogroms and the vicious ethnic cleansing of black Libyans unleashed by the 2011 NATO intervention against the Gaddafi

government. Like Syria, Western powers falsified an image of the anti-government forces as mere liberal democrats yearning for freedom from an oppressive regime. And like Syria, it didn't take much time after the fall of the targeted government for the rebels' true nature to show itself.

Under Gaddafi, black Africans were prominently represented in the government and military, and hundreds of thousands of sub-Saharan Africans came to Libya for work in the comparatively prosperous country. Anti-Gaddafi forces deliberately targeted black Libyans for violence because they associated these Libyans with the state they wanted to destroy. Their racist violence was justified with reference to "African mercenaries" just as massacres of Alawis has been justified by invoking "Assad loyalists".

Shortly after the anti-Gaddafi uprising began, rebels in the city

of Derna took over an airbase and began executing black Africans they accused of being mercenaries. Fifty so-called 'mercenaries' from sub-Saharan Africa were killed.

In September 2011, anti-Gaddafi forces from Misrata captured the mostly black city of Tawergha and unleashed a flood of racist violence on its inhabitants. The city of 25,000 was depopulated by the NATO-backed forces. Amnesty International reported the imprisonment and torture of people from the city "simply for being Tawerghas". A journalist for the *Telegraph* noted that the rebels from Misrata had painted a slogan on the road into Tawergha proclaiming that the Misrata brigade was "the brigade for purging slaves [and] black skin". One survivor of the ethnic cleansing lamented "If we go back... we will be at the mercy of the Misratah brigade." A rebel soldier proudly

stated "Tawergha no longer exists".

Canada, a major participant in the anti-Gaddafi bombing campaign, is on record defending the ethnic cleansing. Canadian General Charles Bouchard, who commanded the NATO force in Libya, defended the Misratan brigade's actions by regurgitating the "African mercenary" accusation. Bouchard said: "Many of these individuals [in Tawergha] are still remnants of mercenaries who need to move out of the country and need to go home because there is no value in keeping them."

In both Libya and Syria, Western imperialism aligned itself with violent racists and sectarians who proved themselves useful in destabilising targeted governments, namely, the Libyan Arab Jamahuriya under the General People's Congress and the Syrian Arab Republic under the Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party. Since NATO's destruction of Libya in 2011, the country is no longer an obstacle to US-led imperialist initiatives on the African continent, and since al-Sharaa's seizure of power in December 2024, any Syrian contribution to the Axis of Resistance has been neutralised.

As long as imperialism gets its way, Western governments and media do not care about the ethnic cleansing and pogroms that these forces unleash on their own people.

People's Voice
(Canada)

Russia and America at the bargaining table

Vladimir Zelensky has agreed to Washington's demand for a comprehensive 30-day ceasefire. "The ball is now in Russia's court". That's what we heard from Kiev, London, Paris and Brussels last week following the talks between the American and Ukrainian delegations in Jeddah. In response, Moscow wanted the terms of a possible ceasefire spelt out.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin said a number of issues needed to be resolved. Will arms deliveries to the Ukrainians continue during the ceasefire? Will press-gang mobilisation into the Ukrainian army continue? How will the ceasefire be monitored? Where are the solid guarantees that the ceasefire will not be a respite for Kiev but a prerequisite for a final peace agreement with recognition of the four regions in the south and the Donbas as Russian territories?

In Zelensky's administration Putin's reaction caused a burst of optimism. They said Russia had rejected Trump's "ultimatum". But as it turned out there was no "ultimatum". The USA intends to achieve peace in Ukraine and for this purpose the Americans do not rule out a long process of negotiations with the Russians.

The USA cannot talk to Russia in the same way it talks to Zelensky's regime. Both the Russians and the Americans are aware of their strengths and capabilities. Putin diplomatically and elegantly turned the conversation to practical matters. The two presidents do not disagree on the essence of the problem – both politicians want



peace. Zelensky, however, does not want a peaceful solution. He wants to drive a wedge between Putin and Trump, but he clearly lacks the strength and authority to do so.

On 18th March 2025 the Russian and American leaders had a telephone conversation. The call lasted 2.5 hours and, according to both sides, was very productive. The deliberately respectful rhetoric is striking. The Russian president is trying to make important symbolic concessions that Trump could use in the internal political struggle with the Democrats. For example, Putin promised to hand over 23 seriously wounded POWs to Ukraine as a goodwill gesture. There are also plans for a 175-for-175 prisoner exchange. Russia's supreme commander also promised his American counterpart to spare the lives of Ukrainian servicemen surrounded in Russian territory in the Kursk region.

As conditions for a 30-day ceasefire, the Kremlin

has demanded the cessation of military supplies and intelligence information to Ukraine, the suspension of barbaric mobilisation, and the Kiev regime's agreement to a final peace settlement with territorial concessions, non-aligned status and respect for the rights of the Russian population. For its part Moscow agreed to a mutual cessation of strikes on energy infrastructure for 30 days.

"Also constructively, the Russian president responded to the idea expressed by Donald Trump to implement the well-known initiative on the safety of navigation in the waters of the Black Sea. It was agreed to start negotiations on further elaboration of specific details of such an arrangement," the Kremlin said. Russia and the USA will now set up negotiating groups to work out the details of a possible ceasefire.

It is important to note that the conversation did not focus exclusively on the Ukrainian crisis. Moscow and Washington have

begun a dialogue on co-operation based on national interests, not the interests of loose military-political blocs. This is bad news for Ukraine and the EU.

"The leaders also addressed the need to halt the proliferation of strategic weapons and intend to work with others to ensure that these measures are applied as widely as possible. Both leaders agreed that a future of improved bilateral relations between the USA and Russia has tremendous potential. This includes major economic deals and geopolitical stability once peace is achieved," says the White House.

In fact, the level of bilateral trade is very low. Trade turnover between Russia and the USA in 2024 amounted to only \$3.5 billion. To be fair, the volume of trade was very low before. In 2013 it was 27.6 billion dollars. In the same period, Russia and Turkey traded 32.7 billion dollars, although the economic potential of Turkey and the USA is not comparable. Russia's GDP ranks fourth

in the world. Its economy is comparable to that of Japan. At the same time, the trade turnover between America and Japan is 227.9 billion dollars. This is 65 times more than the trade volume between Russia and the USA!

This situation is clearly abnormal and not in the interests of the American manufacturer. The demand for American industrial and high-tech products in the Russian Federation is enormous. The active participation of Kirill Dmitriev, the head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund, in the negotiation process is no coincidence. The Kremlin is trying to make an economic case to the White House. The USA has a negative trade balance with its main partners. Trade with the EU deprives the Americans of \$235.6 billion per year, with China of \$295 billion, and with south Korea of \$66 billion. Tariffs alone will not solve the situation. New markets are needed. Russia

needs products from the real sector of the American economy.

Political obstacles to US-Russian trade seem far-fetched. China's top five trading partners include countries that are extremely unfriendly to Beijing: the USA, south Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Vietnam. This does not however, preclude mutually beneficial co-operation.

Close economic ties between a number of Muslim countries and Israel are well known, despite heated discussions over the issue of Palestine. Moreover, America itself has a rich experience of positive economic co-operation with the Russians. In the 1920s and '30s, the USA contributed greatly to the industrialisation of the Soviet Union, despite the fact that Washington did not recognise the existence of the USSR until 1933. Even then, there were many sceptics who accused American business of "lacking patriotism" and "helping the Bolsheviks". Just a few years later, Americans and Russians fought together against a common enemy. This historical example should not be forgotten.

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