

# Stop the famine! End the war!

by our Arab affairs correspondent

**WESTERN POWERS are breaking ranks with Zionism and American imperialism in concerted moves to recognise the state of Palestine and demand an end to the genocidal war in Gaza.**

International outcry over images of emaciated children and mounting hunger-related deaths have pressured Israel to let a trickle of aid into the Gaza Strip. But aid groups say the amounts are not enough to reverse what food experts say is a “worst-case scenario of famine” unfolding in the war-ravaged Palestinian territory. Olga Cherevko, at the UN’s Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Gaza, says that while Israel is now letting slightly more aid into the enclave, it is “not nearly enough to even scratch the surface to meet the people’s needs here on the ground”.

In London the Starmer government says that the United Kingdom will recognise the state of Palestine by September, unless Israel takes “substantive steps” to end its war on Gaza and commit to a genuine peace

process. Three other European countries, Spain, Ireland, and Norway, officially recognised Palestine last year and the French government says they will

recognise the Palestinian state when the UN General Assembly reconvenes in September. And 58 former European Union envoys, in an open letter, have urged the bloc to end arms exports, sanction Israel, and act to stop what they call atrocity crimes. The State of Palestine, essentially the government of the “autonomous” zones in the West Bank, is recognised as a sovereign nation by 147 of the 193 member states of the United Nations, representing 75 per cent of the international community.

France, along with 14 other countries, has signed a declaration suggesting a potential wave of future recognitions of Palestinian statehood. The declaration, known as the New York Call, emphasises that the signatories have either already recognised Palestine or are positively considering such recognition, such as Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. The declaration includes both countries that have already recognised Palestine and others that may do so soon based on the “two-state solution”. The New



Being starved to death in Gaza.

York Call was launched at a United Nations conference on the peaceful resolution of the Palestinian issue, co-chaired by Saudi Arabia and France. It reaffirms global support for a “two-state solution” amid the genocide in Gaza.

Meanwhile tens of thousands of Israelis took to the streets in cities and junctions throughout the country to call for the return of the hostages held in Gaza and for an end to the war in the Gaza Strip. At the main rallies at Tel Aviv’s Hostages Square and Begin Road, thousands gathered to call for the captives’ urgent release from Gaza. After the rally, protesters joined attendees of two other rallies in a march toward the American embassy. Yael Adar, whose son Tamir was killed defending Kibbutz Nir Oz during the Hamas

assault in October 2023, told the crowd that continued war in Gaza endangers the hostages and Israeli society at large, and assailed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s comment on Friday that Israel and the US were “considering alter-

native options” to bring the captives home after the two countries recalled their negotiators. “The alternative of continuing the fighting is dangerous, creates a forever war, more civilian victims and bogs us down in the Gaza morass,” she said.

## FUND

The June/July appeal ended this week with a bang. We needed £7,000 to hit our target for the two month fighting fund. And a Chigwell supporter donated £3,000 giving us a grand total £8,613. That’s certainly going to keep our presses rolling – especially these days when we need to get the *New Worker* out on the street every day to challenge the lies of the imperialists and Zionists who want to plunge the world into another global conflict. The August appeal starts now. Help us build the communist movement that is so badly needed in Britain today. Make sure that the communist voice is heard every week in every factory, office and neighbourhood across the country by supporting the fighting fund.

Please send your donations 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

## On a roll...

**WITH 600,000 sign-ups and more still pouring in the Corbynistas' new party is certainly taking off. The motley crew of Blairites and Zionists behind the Starmer clique led the witch-hunt that drove Jeremy Corbyn and many others out of the Labour Party. Now they bleat on about splitting the "left" vote and opening the door to the Faragists. But nobody's listening and nobody cares.**

The New Communist Party was founded in 1977 to build the communist movement around the revolutionary principles of Marxism Leninism. Since then we have campaigned for the maximum working class unity against the ruling class, while campaigning to build the revolutionary party. At the same time day-to-day demands for reform, progressive taxation, state welfare and a public sector dedicated to meet the people's needs are winnable under capitalism, particularly in a rich country like Britain. We support these demands and back the demands of those within the labour movement who are campaigning for greater social justice.

Working people can never achieve state power through bourgeois elections. Bourgeois elections are democratic only for the ruling class and their instruments, a tool to mask their real dictatorship. All bourgeois elections are the manipulation of the largest number of votes by the smallest number of people.

We supported those in the Labour Party fighting for left social-democratic policies. We also backed those, like Ken Livingstone who defied the Labour leadership, with rank-and-file Labour Party and union support. And our Party will continue to support left social-democratic Labour activists with mass support, even when they come into electoral conflict with the Labour leadership.

Now hundreds of thousands of people are again rallying to Corbyn's banner. The Independent Alliance in one form or another will clearly be able to run a national slate at the next general election. Their existing MPs look set to keep their seats and the prospects of flipping others into their camp is now a realistic prospect for the future.

But what everyone on the left really wants to know is what the new platform led by Jeremy Corbyn and Zarah Sultana will be. It clearly will reflect the existing support for the Palestinians shared by the Corbyn-led Independent Alliance in the House of Commons. It will doubtless embrace the left social-democratic pledges on public ownership, jobs and the health service that Corbyn has supported throughout his political career.

Corbyn has ruled out a merger with the Greens while leaving the door open to co-operation in Parliament. But the electoral stance and structure of the new platform – which still has to be officially named – is still to come.

When Corbyn led Labour only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands who supported him actually took part in constituency politics which left the Blairites in control of the party apparatus well-placed to use Starmer as a Trojan Horse to get rid of the Corbynistas and put themselves back at the helm. It was more or less the same in the unions where the bogus "broad left" factions posed as Corbynistas when it suited them but did nothing to save him when the purge began. It may be different this time round but that will depend on if the hundreds of thousands who've ticked the box over the past few weeks actually take part in the decision-making processes that will chart the course of this new party.

# Imperial nostalgia and unrealistic dreams

**RECENTLY, when asked what the UK is doing to help the island of Taiwan British Defence Secretary John Healey said "prepare for potential escalation from China".**

"If we have to fight, as we have done in the past, Australia and the UK are nations that will fight together" he said. Although the minister swiftly hit the brakes afterwards by claiming that he was speaking in "general terms" his remarks, which the British media described as some of the "most robust from a British representative on the subject of possible engagement in a future war in the region," indicate the intention of some British politicians to boost the UK's presence in the Asia-Pacific.

Healey made his remarks while aboard HMS Prince of Wales in Darwin, Australia. Britain's current strategic posture cannot be separated from its underlying reality. As Washington reassesses the AUKUS trilateral security pact, the UK is eager to build a new bilateral framework with Australia, including signing a 50-year-long defence treaty last week. Additionally, Britain has sent a carrier strike group to join Australia's largest-ever military exercise, Talisman Sabre 2025. While the official explanation for the UK's participation in the drill is to "demonstrate Britain's unwavering commitment to Indo-Pacific security" in essence, this is a geopolitical performance to prove that Britain is still relevant in the region.

Healey's words recall a recent report in the *Financial*

*Times*: The US pressured ally countries, including Japan and Australia, to clarify their stance in the event of a conflict in the Taiwan Straits, only to face "collective raising of eyebrows" citing sources. In contrast to these countries, which have maintained diplomatic restraint on the Taiwan question, the defence chief of the UK eagerly rushed to make a declaration that the UK was "ready to fight" in the Straits. No matter how you look at it, doesn't it look like London offering a "loyalty pledge" to Washington, which hopes its allies will share more security responsibilities?

What's ironic is that not long ago, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese explicitly declined to comment on whether Australia would join the USA and other allies in countering China if a conflict broke out. He also confirmed that Australia remains committed to the one-China policy and does not support "Taiwan independence" during his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing on 15th July. Given Canberra's cautious and restrained stance, one must ask: is Australia even aware that the UK has pledged to "fight together" with it?

For the UK, such posturing also reflects a lingering imperial-era spectre. For a country that once took pride in colonising many countries and regions and projecting power across the seas, flaunting its aircraft carriers in the Pacific and hyping up militarism over the Taiwan Straits is little more than self-indulgent nostalgia.

Notably, after making such provocative remarks, Healey quickly back-pedalled reiterating that the UK would prefer to see any disputes in the region resolved "peacefully" and "diplomatically". However, this is a typical manoeuvre among certain Western politicians: trying to reap geopolitical dividends while avoiding getting burned. In their attempt to appear fair and balanced, they end up revealing nothing but their own opportunism.

Nevertheless, the Taiwan question is at the core of China's core interests and represents a red line that must not be trodden on. The Taiwan Straits are not a "projection screen" for Britain's imperial nostalgia, a stage for some politicians to perform their political grandstanding, nor an arena for countries to show off their geopolitical relevance. If the British defence chief is really eager to "clarify" that the UK's approach to Taiwan remains unchanged, then let that – respecting the one-China principle – be reflected in actions, not just words.

China's strategic resolve, military preparedness and unwavering will to defend national reunification cannot be shaken by a few warmongering remarks from some Western figures. Any reckless rhetoric on the Taiwan question will only serve to expose strategic fragility – and leave those who uttered such words embarrassing themselves on the global stage.

*Global Times*





## Workers' Notes

### Birmingham Blues

by New Worker correspondent

THE LONG running saga surrounding the costly hotel and conference centre built by Unite in Birmingham has taken important steps forward with the online publication of Project Clean Up, subtitled an Interim Report into Allegations of Historical Corruption, (hereafter the Report), a 63-page document which is heavily redacted due to continuing police involvement which may or may not end with charges.

The union has also published a recent re-audit of the 2021 figures by accountants BDO which is briefly outlined below. A thorough investigation was one of present General Secretary Sharon Graham's 2021 election campaign promises, matters which played an important role in her victory. An early result of these investigations was the April 2022 South Wales Police raid on Unite's London HQ. Investigations by the Serious Fraud and HM Customs and Revenue continue.

The background is that the building eventually cost £110 million despite being worth only £35 million. These overall figures are not in doubt, only who is responsible and whether there was criminal action involved. Defenders of the project say that the increase in costs were due to last minute changes in both the design and size of the building. Another reason cited was that Unite properly avoided the normal dodgy cost-cutting practices common in the construction industry such as fake self-employment and insisted on union rates for the job.

In all there have been five union commissioned reports, one was by construction barrister Martin Bowdery KC, an independent legal report into possible criminality, a forensic accounting report by Grant Thornton, and a legal report into problems with Unite's governance by Bark & Co, the "top expert criminal defence lawyers".

In large complex projects

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## A victory for the Korean people

by New Worker correspondent

IN JULY 1953 US imperialism signed an armistice ending the Korean war. The war began when the Americans and their lackeys attacked north Korea in June 1950. It ended with the USA beaten to a standstill by the Korean People's Army and the Chinese volunteers on 27th July 1953. But though the USA signed the armistice it never honoured the terms of the truce. It still refuses to normalise relations with the people's government in the north and the Korean peninsula remains divided, with the south still occupied by thousands of US troops. And all of this was commemorated last weekend by Korean Friendship Association (KFA) campaigners in Brixton.

NCP leader Andy Brooks joined other comrades marking the 72nd anniversary of the Korean people in the Korean war at a south London community centre just



Dermot Hudson and Andy Brooks in Brixton.

a stone's throw from Brixton station. In his opening remarks KFA Chair Dermot Hudson said "in today's world we are seeing an increase in aggression and intervention by US imperialism and its proxies such as the Zionists so it is important to increase solidarity with People's Korea, an anti-imperialist socialist country. We are here today to mark two important victories of People's Korea against imperialism. Tomorrow July 27th is the 72nd anniversary of the victory against the US imperialists in the Fatherland

Liberation War and in less than three weeks from now it will be the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonial rule on 15th August. Both victories were the fruit of the Juche idea and are associated with the leadership of President Kim Il Sung. Both are an example of a small country winning victory by its own efforts against overwhelming odds".

And in his contribution Andy Brooks, the general secretary of the New Communist Party, recalled the great victory of the Korean people

in the Fatherland Liberation War pointing out that the south Korean troops in the war were reduced to the role of ancillaries and servants for the Americans and their lackeys flying the false flag of the United Nations to cover their criminal aggression.

The speeches were followed by a Q & A session which sparked off an interesting discussion about the DPR Korea's policies on Palestine and Israel and questions about building solidarity with People's Korea across London and throughout the country.

## Justice for Gaza!

by New Worker correspondent

PROTESTERS rallied outside the Egyptian embassy in London last weekend to call on the Sisi government to open up the Rafah crossing on the Egyptian border with the Gaza Strip to allow humanitarian aid into the beleaguered Palestinian enclave. Children attempted to post letters by hand, hoping that the Ambassador would read them, but they were stopped by the police guarding the embassy.

The mass picket was part of an emergency protest in front of Egyptian embassies all around the world called by the Egyptian Revolutionary Council, a Turkish-based movement that supports the Muslim Brotherhood, which



was outlawed in Egypt after its government was overthrown by General Sisi in 2013.

But back in Cairo the Egyptian Foreign Ministry condemned the demonstra-

tions saying that they serve the Israeli occupation and divert public opinion from those truly responsible for the humanitarian crisis. They said the Rafah crossing is ultimately controlled by the

Israelis who have closed it as part of their campaign to take over the Gaza Strip and denied allegations that held Egypt responsible for the worsening humanitarian crisis in the Palestinian enclave.



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**The Details**

there can be many reasons for cost overruns which do not necessarily result from criminality. However Martin Bowdery points out that higher wages could not possibly account for more than a small fraction of the final costs. Even Unite's national construction officer was not convinced workers were on union rates, and reported they were "self-employed" further up the union food chain.

While the bourgeois press made much of claims that former General Secretary Len McCluskey benefited from free flights on private jets to European football matches provided by the Main Contractor to watch his beloved Liverpool in action, in one case involving a well-publicised stay at a Madrid hotel, there is much more to the case. McCluskey, from the former T&GWU part of Unite, was GS of Unite between 2011 and 2021, while the project was first discussed in 2012 and completed in late 2020. He states that precisely because he was a known friend of directors of the Main Contractor he did not involve himself in the details.

Overall McCluskey's lawyers have said that the allegations made in the Unite Report about him were "inaccurate, selective and highly misleading". He has correctly not publicly responded to specifics due to the ongoing investigation but has had his responses to certain matters recorded in the Report. He has firmly denied allegations about the football trips, asserting he always paid his own way.

Martin Bowdery found that Unite had been overcharged by at least £30 million by the main contractor. According to BDO this resulted in a £66 million impairment in the 2021 accounts. This overcharging included an original estimate of £91,000 for holes in blockwork walls for which the union was billed £1.3 million.

There was no competitive tendering for the Main Contractor. This was the Liverpool based Flanagan Group. Responsibility for placing the contract is disputed. The Report claims Len McCluskey did so, despite objections from Unite staff and lawyers. In turn McCluskey claims these decisions were made by a now deceased Finance Director without his knowledge.

The Report provides evidence of the Finance Director objecting to Flanagan being appointed and later being told to stop criticising Flanagan when the project was underway.

It has been noted that in 2015 Unite paid £500,000 to Flanagan for payments or loans for an unrelated matter which does not seem to have been repaid. There were many other complaints within Unite against the Flanagan Group due to delays and cost overruns on previous projects. Some thought it was unnecessary.

In 2016 a wholly owned subsidiary company, Blackhorse HCC Limited, was set up to manage the project. Curiously three directors claimed they were unaware they were on the board for several years.

There are also disputes about when Unite was aware of the increased costs. McCluskey

says he knew costs had reached £90 million in late 2019. Another senior Unite official was told three times in March 2020 it had risen to £98 million. But the EC was only officially told in January 2021 after the Times reported on it. Because it was reported in that paper some tried to dismiss the criticisms as a right-wing attack against the union.

Regarding how the union handled these matters, the Unite Report describes how solicitors Bark & Co identified that potential wrongdoing could emerge due to there being an "ask no questions" culture which saw those that did raise concerns being isolated.

Bark also claims that a culture of favouritism could enable wrongdoing and misuse of Unite members' funds. This was ensured by jobs and promotions only going to members of the United Left (UL) faction which meant there was little real scrutiny of the escalating costs and other issues.

This is backed up by the BDO Re-audit of 2021 which concludes that there was a "pervasive fraud environment" under the Len McCluskey leadership, in which "dominant personalities and a weak control environment facilitated".

BDO also say that in addition to evidence that "certain former members of senior management may have acted dishonestly, not in accordance with Union policies and overrode controls" there was: "a wide range of significant control deficiencies, further facilitating potential management override of controls". It recommends that "the EC should put in steps to enhance controls throughout the Union, to re-

duce the ongoing risk of fraud and error".

Sharon Graham says that since launching the investigations she has "been subjected to a campaign of unacceptable tactics, including intimidation, and being targeted by online smear campaigns typically using anonymous and fake accounts". She has also attacked UL members on the EC for being obstructive on this and other issues. This included UL attempts to depose Unite Chair Andy Green who broke ranks with them. She warned that as "money left our union when it should not have, I will do everything in my power to get our money back."

Looking to the future the Report announces plans to prevent a repetition including a new qualified Finance Director, professional accounting team; a new gifts policy, and the first ever Procurement manager who will develop new rules. A Democracy Commission, from the Shop Steward base, to make recommendations on the union's governance is promised.

**What Next**

Whatever the details of the outcome of this matter, it is clear that Unite will not come out smelling of roses. In particular, it does not look good for the old guard left in Unite, who were in charge while this was happening. The normally vocal United left has largely ignored the issue, except to remind us that Sharon Graham sat on the committees which approved the project.

Gerard Coyne, the right-wing former West Midlands secretary and twice unsuccessful GS candidate, told the Ob-

server that "this is one of the biggest financial scandals in union history and I feel overwhelming relief that a light has been shone on this terrible episode. It's gobsmacking that an organisation that had a turnover of more than £170 million a year had no proper checks and balances on financial spend and accountability. There was a shocking and systematic misuse of union members' money". In future elections UL will have some difficult questions to answer.

Broader issues affecting the whole trade union movement arise from this matter. At a time when a watered-down Employment Rights Bill is going through its final parliamentary stages such matters do not bode well for those arguing for less state control of unions in such matters as running strike ballots.

Another lesson that needs to be learned is that claims by "left-wingers" that any criticism of their activities in the union movement is the part of a right-wing conspiracy should be subject to a degree of scepticism. It is notable that the "daily paper" of the left has been almost totally silent on the matter. At the time of typing, several days after the release of the documents, the Morning Star has not said a single word about them.

It is perhaps unrelated, but Unite Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner has recently announced that he is retiring during TUC week, after a 42-year career in the union which began with him being elected as a shop steward at a London bus garage. It will be interesting to see if this becomes part of a trend.

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

**12th August 2005**

**TONY BLAIR'S announcement of a series of new "anti-terror" laws, including the prospect of secret courts, information withheld from suspects about the nature of the charges against them and people being held for up to three months without trial, have heightened fears that this country could**

**be heading fast towards a fascist police state.**

**Civil rights lawyer Gareth Peirce commented: "There is nothing I can say as a lawyer that can adequately react to so terrifying an announcement. This is a statement of dangerous self-delusion, deliberately ignoring history, legality, principle and justice."**

**But as each measure is announced, opposition is growing fast, including powerful sectors within our deeply divided ruling class who are not happy with Blair's adherence to the increasingly fascist neo-con policies of George Bush.**

**Blair's proposed new laws**

**are strikingly similar to those of South Africa's apartheid regime where anyone could be imprisoned without charge or trial for 90 days; then released and re-arrested within half an hour and held for another 90 days. The Nazis used a similar technique.**

**The proposed identity cards scheme carries echoes of apartheid's pass laws. But the Blair government is backing off from this now that the logistics of implementing it are becoming ever more complex and expensive.**

**The Minister responsible, Tony McNulty, last Thursday admitted: "Perhaps in**

**the past the Government in its enthusiasm oversold the advantages of ID cards. We did suggest or at least implied that they may well be a panacea for ID fraud, benefit fraud, terrorism and entitlement and access to public services."**

**No doubt the government intends this small retreat to be temporary. Given time they will come up with a cheaper but even worse scheme. They will be counting on further terror attacks to panic MPs into allowing outrageous legislation to go through on the nod.**

**The London terror attacks have allowed Blair to push**

**forward many measures that he and former Home Secretary David Blunkett tried to get through earlier this year but were thwarted in the courts.**

**Even the Prime Minister's wife, Cherie Blair, has baulked at the measures her husband hopes to implement. She is aware of the level of opposition among Britain's judges who could sink the new laws by refusing to implement those that contradict our human rights legislation. This is why both Blair and Tory leader Michael Howard have been trying to browbeat the judiciary.**



by Vijay Prashad

**TENSION has increased in southern Syria as Israeli warplanes bombed the Ministry of Defence in Damascus and areas around the presidential palace as well as villages in As-Suwayda. At least 250 Syrians died in these air strikes on 16th July 2025.**

The transitional authorities in Syria led by the former al-Qaeda chief Ahmed al-Sharaa condemned the attacks, which Israel justified as necessary to stop the fighting between the Syrian forces, the hastily organised Quwwat al-Badu (or Bedouin Forces), and the Druze Harakat Rijal al-Karama (Men of Dignity). The latter, the Men of Dignity, joined with the Sheikh al-Karama Forces and the Liwa al-Jabal (Mountain Brigade) in the As-Suwayda area to create the Ghurfat 'Amaliyyat al-Janub (Southern Operations) group in December 2024 to defend the region from the incursions of the Israelis and the new Syrian government.

That group had a split earlier this year, which reduced their ability to hold off the incursion of the Israelis beyond their earlier occupation of Syria's Golan Heights from 1967. Israel had expanded its control of the Golan toward the As-Suwayda area and has been blamed by local forces for interference in local disputes to allow it to enlarge its military occupation even further.

Since 2012, the central authority of the Syrian state has been weakened from the edge of the Golan Heights through the city of Daraa to the villages of As-Suwayda forming a belt along the southern edge of Syria and along the border with Jordan. Syrian military forces remained in this zone, but their legitimacy was at a historical low. It was into this vacuum that several military forces emerged. The Druze community in the area led by Sheikh Wahid al-Bal'ous formed the

# Israel and the Drug War in Syria



Israel bombs Defence Ministry in Damascus.

Harakat Rijal al-Karama (Men of Dignity) in 2013, while an alliance of various fighters led by Murhij Hussein al-Jarmani (aka Abu Ghaith) formed the Liwa al-Jabal (Mountain Brigade) the following year; these groups were set up to defend the Druze community from attacks by the al-Qaeda group Jabhat al-Nusra that had begun to move south from the Qalamoun Mountains and seemed to be getting assistance from the Israeli intelligence and military forces. The decline in the role of the Syrian military in this area led to the increased political and security role of both the Men of Dignity and the Mountain Brigade, who fought off the al-Qaeda forces and later the ISIS attacks as well as the Israeli attacks.

## the fentanyl network

In 2012, when I first encountered the Syrian military along the road alongside the Qalamoun mountains, it was already

clear that their morale oscillated between extreme certainty that they would win and absolute exhaustion by the pyrrhic nature of the war. Without American or Israeli air support, the various rebel armies – the most enthusiastic being the al-Qaeda forces – would not have been able to prevail; this provided the Syrian Arab Army with its confidence.

However, each time that the Syrian army advanced, it would have to do so by enormous shelling and violence that hit civilian targets, reduced its sense of moral superiority, and destroyed the basis for the Syrian economy. A collapsed economy and a slowly withering State apparatus deteriorated the morale of the Syrian army. By 2013 all sides in the conflict kept up their fighting spirits not by politics or ideology but by the influx of vast amounts of amphetamine, or what in Syria was known by its brand names of Captagon and Tramadol – the 'white pills of death',

as they were called by the fighters.

In the As-Suwayda area, near the Jordanian border, I was told, large-scale production of these pills had begun. These farms were mostly in the hands of ex-military men who had gone into business with international drug syndicates. Rumours circulated about a decade ago about the association of Brigadier General Wafiq Nasser in establishing the drug production and distribution network out of a series of small villages in the As-Suwayda region. Brigadier Nasser worked with Abu Yassin Ahmad Jaafar and Jamil al-Balaas to build the farm system south of As-Suwayda city from the villages of Busra al-Sham to al-Qurayya – roughly 20 kilometres from Jordan. These men, alongside Marei al-Ramthan and Raji Falhout used the collapsed Syrian State system to their advantage, built ties with Jordanian and Lebanese officials through a system of bribes and be-

gan to dominate the trade in amphetamine drug production and sales throughout the region (including into Israel, largely for recreational use).

Tension grew between the self-defence units (mainly the Druze's Men of Dignity) and the drug gangs, as the former tried to stop the latter from selling amphetamines to people in the area itself. In 2015, a car bomb in As-Suwayda killed Wahid al-Bal'ous, the leader of the Men of Dignity. Rumours circulated that he was killed by the Syrian government, and then by al-Qaeda (after the arrest of a man named Wafi Abu Trabi). But it was clear under the surface that al-Bal'ous was a victim of the drug war. Three years after this assassination, the Men of Dignity captured Abu Yassin Ahmad Jaafar, who told them – on camera – that he was involved in the assassination of al-Bal'ous and that he was one of the main drug kingpins of the area. He was later killed by the Men of Dignity.

In Jaafar's video confession, he mentioned that Marei al-Ramthan had organised a group of Bedouin youth to smuggle the drugs across the border into Jordan. Al-Ramthan, who was a herder before he got into the drug business in 2006, was able to absorb the much larger production that began after 2012, and he became – in fact – known as the biggest transporter of drugs in the Levant. Jordan's courts had several times condemned him to prison, but he had never been arrested.

## drug wars

The slow collapse of the Syrian state led to the rise of local authorities as independent masters of the drug trade. In 2018, Major-General Kifah al-Mulhim took over from Brigadier Nasser. Al-Mulhim's appointment first raised hopes that the drug networks might be put under pressure. In 2021, the State arrested Raji Falhout,

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but hours later released him. Then, in July 2022, the state officials alongside the Men of Dignity raided Falhout's farm and found a captagon laboratory. Later that year, in December, the government arrested al-Ramthan but then released him.

That same year, the Syrian army with the paramilitary Liwa al-Jabal (the Mountain Brigade) fought the Falhout militia near the Jordanian border and eliminated several of them. From January to March 2024, the Jordanian air force struck many of these captagon farms in the countryside of As-Suwayda; these strikes killed civilians, leading the Men of Dignity movement to ask Jordan to stop them.

The Syrian military was silent in public. Either al-Mulhim was part of the vast drug network that went from As-Suwayda to Damascus and elsewhere, or he did not have the authority to carry out a proper clean-up in the region. Towards the last days of the Assad government, al-Mulhim was recalled to Baghdad as the director of the Syrian National Security Bureau.

The United States had placed personal sanctions on al-Mulhim because of his role in the Syrian state. After the fall of Assad, these personal sanctions were removed.

The fall of Assad's government in December 2024 came largely because of the Israeli war on Lebanon (which weakened Hezbollah), the air strikes on Syrian military positions, and a co-ordinated blitzkrieg of the former al-Qaeda forces from the northern city of

Idlib to Damascus. Israel, taking advantage of the situation, pushed out of the illegally occupied Golan Heights into the region near As-Suwayda. The Israelis argued that this was a new security barrier not only for Israel, but for the Druze minority community.

But this was merely an excuse. Taking advantage of the fights over the drug farms in July 2025, the Israelis struck several targets, including the government buildings in Damascus, but not the drug farms, once more saying that it did so to protect the Druze. But several Druze leaders, including Sheikh Sami Abi al-Muna, said that they did not need Israeli protection and that Israel's genocide against the Palestinians invalidated their claim to humanitarianism. Instead, the Israeli strikes seek to put pressure on the former al-Qaeda chief Ahmed al-Sharaa, now transitional president of Syria (who had US sanctions against himself, and Syria lifted on 30th June 2025).

Al-Sharaa has not yet done what Israel expects, which is to recognise Israel. He has expelled leaders of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and Hamas, and he has arrested Islamic Jihad leaders, but that is not enough. Israel will continue to use any excuse to pummel Syria to get its way. It is neither drugs nor the Druze that worries Israel; it is that al-Sharaa has not surrendered Syria's pro-Palestinian history at the feet of the Israeli regime.

**People's Democracy (India)**

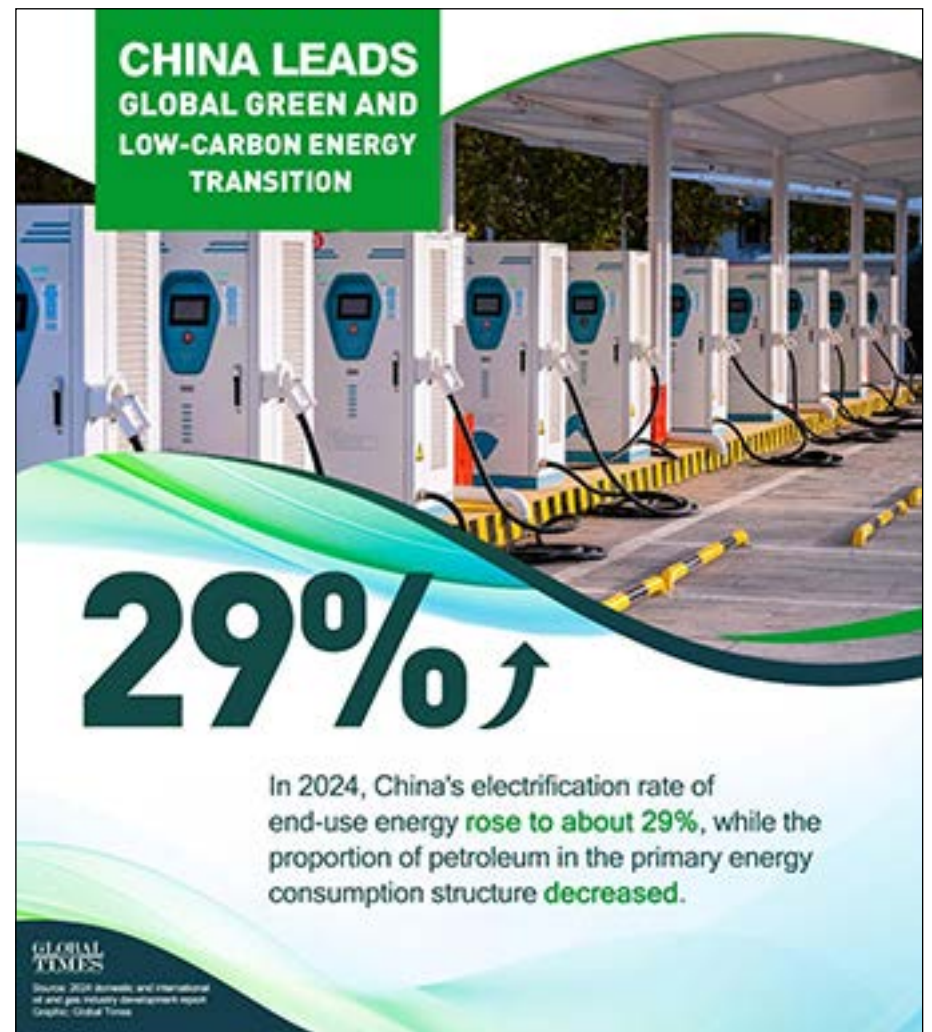
# China: full of people eager to try new things

**CURIOSITY** about China is drawing a growing number of international travellers to see the country for themselves.

From walking ancient stones atop the Great Wall to riding high-speed trains between glittering skylines, many say they've discovered a China they didn't expect to see. People like Dr Stephen Davies, head of education of British Institute of Economic Affairs think tank, who told *Global Times* reporter Li Aixin that he wanted to visit China for many years to see what kind of new world is taking shape in East Asia, and what he has seen in China are dynamism, the novelty of everything, and numerous opportunities.

**You travelled through China for a month this year, after which you published your impressions in The Telegraph. What prompted you to visit China in the first place?**

I've wanted to visit China for many years. I'm a historian and for a long time, I've had a great interest in Chinese history. I wanted to see the places in person. I've been to East Asia, having visited Singapore, but I really wanted to see what you might call the heart of East Asia: China. I wanted to see what it's like now, and exactly what kind of



new world is taking shape in East Asia.

**At the very beginning of your article, you described China's infrastructure as "jaw-dropping" - mentioning high-speed rail, airports and urban development. Could you elaborate on one or two aspects that particularly struck you, that made you feel: This is not the China I thought I knew?**

I did mention the high-speed rail, which was simply stagger-

ing, both in terms of scale and quality. The high-speed trains are incredibly smooth - so smooth and quiet, in fact, that you hardly know you're going over 200 miles an hour unless you look out the window. The stations are incredible in terms of their size, cleanliness, and organisation.

An obvious comparison is with the terrible state of infrastructure here in the UK. While in China you've built more than 45,000 kilometres of high-speed rail, Britain has faced significant delays in constructing HS2. It is

an embarrassing comparison. I knew about all that, but actually seeing it in person was something else.

What I also noticed, though, in terms of infrastructure, was the extent of smaller-scale infrastructure built in the countryside. I was struck by the network of small but very useful paved highways, lanes and roads spread throughout very remote rural parts of China, which I noticed, for example, in Yunnan in Southwest China.

The way this has tied even once-remote rural areas into the national highway



network was very impressive. Both the organisation required to build it and the impact it has – integrating rural areas into the wider national economy and society – are remarkable. It clearly took a great deal of effort, planning and organisation.

**Some of the Western media outlets portray China as “repressive,” yet you highlighted the dynamic state of China. Are there any stories or moments you could share that made you think China is dynamic?**

The economic data and a whole range of other indicators like scientific publications, suggest that China is a very dynamic society, both economically and in terms of discovery and intellectual research.

From my own historical reading and study, I know that China has periodically, under the Song, Tang (especially the high Tang period), and Han dynasties, been an extremely innovative and dynamic civilisation. Therefore, in a way, the things I observed simply confirmed my expectations.

I noticed the sheer liveliness of the cities – the level of activity, the amount of commerce and trade, and the energy you feel in the busyness of the place. It’s a marked contrast, I have to say, with the more depressed parts of many Western societies.

If you go to places like London or Paris, you get a similar feeling. But that’s often not the case in more depressed, post-industrial areas in the West. I didn’t get the



Robots being built.

impression that China has a “rust belt,” or areas lacking in economic dynamism, at least not in the places I visited. You could very quickly sense a strong work ethic: people working long hours, committed to their jobs and eager to advance.

I noticed there’s some concern in certain circles about what’s called tang ping – or “lying flat,” -- with young people choosing to opt out of the rat race. But I think that’s part of a broader adjustment young people are making all over the world, given current economic trends.

What struck me

most was the novelty of everything – the feeling that you’re in a part of the world still growing rapidly. It felt incredibly enterprising, full of people eager to try new things, develop products, build infrastructure and innovate intellectually.

That was especially noticeable in the Yangtze Delta. In Hangzhou, Suzhou and Shanghai, you really get a vibrant sense of being in a place where people are always thinking, surrounded by high-rise buildings, asking themselves: What new thing can I do? What new business venture can I try? What new

idea can I come up with? There’s a very strong innovative energy and spirit.

**You are very open-minded toward China’s development. In your view, how do people in the UK – common people in society and political leaders – tend to perceive China’s development?**

I believe the general public is not very aware of what’s going on in the rest of the world. The problem is that media focus is not only parochial, but when the rest of the world is men-

tioned, it largely consists of the USA.

Others, among both the intellectual class and certain political circles, tend to view China in darker tones, seeing it primarily in terms of competition rather than opportunity. That’s an incredibly dangerous way of thinking. I believe it stems from a focus not on opportunities for trade and exchange – which, by definition, bring mutual benefit – but instead on power dynamics.

If you think of relations with other parts of the world, like China, in terms of opportunities for trade, mutual benefit, the exchange of ideas and cultural interaction – leading to hybridisation and innovation – then the picture is extremely positive.

China’s development should be seen as a tremendous opportunity, one that offers mutual benefit. But if you view it through the lens of power and relative strength – as ruling elites often do – you’ll conclude, “This is bad; they’re becoming more powerful than us.” That’s an incredi-

bly dangerous mindset.

That kind of power-based thinking is more common among those with political influence. In contrast, people in business or intellectual circles often see competition as peaceful and productive. They may acknowledge that others are doing better in certain areas by various metrics, and that can motivate progress.

**While China seems willing to engage globally, some Western countries are building trade barriers. How do you view this trend?**

It is not sustainable. Protectionism is making a big revival. Any economist will tell you that protectionism is the wrong way to go, and a trade war is incredibly damaging and self-defeating – it’s just insanely bad economics. For example, the US president seems to think that selling physical goods and services to Americans in exchange for paper dollars is somehow exploiting Americans. Personally, I would really like to be exploited that way.

If one country is foolish enough to tax its own consumers by making foreign goods more expensive, then you should let them go ahead and do it – because protectionism basically harms one’s own domestic consumers. What’s really bad about protectionism are the political implications. Historically, protectionism leads to competition for resources, competition between states for access to key materials like strategic minerals and oil. And that has never ended well.



Made in China.



## LETTERS

### Dear Comrades

We bid farewell to the national revolutionary communist fighter, the Secretary-General of our Syrian Communist Party, Comrade Ammar Bakdash.

My father grew up in a nationalist communist family, and he was the son of the leader of the Syrian communists, Khaled Bakdash, and the militant Wesal Farha Bakdash. From his childhood he was raised in the values of defending the poor and oppressed, believing that the treatment of the tragedies of humanity and the establishment of a society of social justice, co-operation and fraternity can only be based on social ownership of the means of production under the authority of the proletariat. He considered Marxism-Leninism not just an ideology that conserves it, but a daily practice that guides it to the right path, so he was an inspiration to all who knew him and he did not tire of answering comrades' questions

about thought, economics, history, politics, literature, poetry, resistance and life itself.

My father was distinguished by his courage in his national, class, and internationalist positions. He always stressed that the future of humanity, including national liberation, is in the hands of the toiling masses who have nothing to lose but their shackles, and he was sure that victory would be the ally of those who put their hope on these masses and fight under their banner, the banner of national liberation and social justice, at the same time.

He carried the worries of the homeland in his heart until the last moment. Syria remained in his thoughts every day, longing for it no matter how far away he was, and dreaming of returning to it free, dear and lofty. And now he is leaving it. But I am sure that he will remain present in it, present in every corner of Damascus that I love, and will remain alive in our hearts and minds as long as we live.

He was deeply pained by the events that took place in our country following the fierce attack of its enemies. He clearly saw that the obscurantist and tyrannical power had no national contour but was a puppet of imperialism and reactionary regimes, prostrating itself before Israel, and an enemy of the people in all aspects of its internal policy. He always said that the right path for our country is the struggle for freedom, full national sovereignty and the unity of the national territory, through the establishment

of a democratic national government as a radical opposite to tyrannical and puppet rule. His last words still ring in my ears as he repeated: "We are holding on to the embers...we will not lose our way, no matter how dark it is".

Comrades, at this moment, even if I am not among you, I know that you are my family and his family, and that your love when you bid him farewell in his last exile in Athens is the balm that soothes the pain of parting. Today, I can only express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the comrades of the Communist Party of Greece and its militant revolutionary leadership, who were his best support and safe haven, who stood by him from the first moment of his arrival in Athens, accompanied him until the moment of his departure, and presided over the funeral of his body, which will remain faithful to them until this black cloud is lifted from the skies of our country.

Today you have lost a father, and an entire nation has lost a great fighter, a free thinker and a great human being. But I pledge to you before this honourable gathering that I will remain faithful to your will and to the principles for which you lived...we will remain loyal to the path that you have walked, the path of freedom, dignity and socialism, until our homeland sweeps away the abomination of the colonisers and all their tools, and returns free and united. Sleep with your eyes closed, O Abu Khalid... your party remains... and your comrades continue to follow in your footsteps...

What you have planted will remain alive in us, and your path will remain a beacon of guidance until freedom and justice are achieved in our beloved homeland.

**Khaled Bakdash**  
Central Committee  
Syrian  
Communist Party

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

### Dear Comrades

Dermot Hudson, (New Worker 20.6.2025) says that the cultural imperialism of the USA is a massive problem in the world. I agree with him.

In the early days of industrial capitalism workers were considered purely as producers by the capitalists; they cared nothing for the workers activities in his or her "leisure" time! The little "leisure" that was left, that is!

Employers attempted to supervise the worker's life on the job but their control ended when the worker left the factory at closing time. Capitalists regarded the supervision of the workers' private lives merely as a means of making the worker sober, thrifty, and productive. In addition, they attempted to impose a "morality" on the working class, by railing against tobacco, alcohol, and dissipation.

However there were a handful of employers at this time who understood that the worker might be useful to the capitalists, as a consumer; that he or she needed to be imbued with a taste for "higher" things; that a capitalist economy based on mass production required not only capitalist organisation of production but the organisation of consumption and leisure as well. Capitalist mass production would go on to demand the "education" of the masses; the masses would have to learn to "behave". They "must" achieve, not mere literacy, but "culture", in other words, the capitalist "teacher" had to "educate" the masses in the culture of consumption. the mass consumption of commodities in ever-increasing abundance would demand a mass market to absorb them.

The capitalist economies, especially in the USA, having reached the point where it's (the USA's) technology was thought to be capable of satisfying basic material needs, now relied on the creation of new consumer "demands"; on convincing people to buy goods for which they are unaware of any need until the "need" is forcibly brought to their attention by the mass media. Advertising became the method by which the desire is created for "better" things. The attempt to

## Diary

### UNTIL 14 SEPT

Peace Museum: Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp exhibition. Thursdays-Sundays 10:00-16:00. Salts Mill, Victoria Road, Saltaire, Shipley BD18 3LA.

### UNTIL 14 NOV

Prince Charles Cinema: Films of Andrei Tarkovsky's season. (Soviet film director 1932-86). PCC, 7 Leicester Pl, London WC2H 7BY. Detail and tickets on PCC website.

### WED 6 AUG

Medical Aid for Palestine: Jews for Gaza. Comedy fund raiser. 8:30, Laughing Horse at the Counting House (Venue 170), 38 West Nicolson Street, EH8 9DD

### WED 6 to SAT 9 AUG

Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: Commemorations of the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Nationwide events. See CND website for details.

### SAT 9 AUG

In Solidarity: A Celebration of Palestinian Culture. 16:00-20:00, Culpepper Community Garden, 1 Cloudesley Road, London, N1 0EJ. £10.00+. Register at bit.ly/culpepperfundraiser

### SAT 9 AUG

New Communist Party: Party Centre, Reception to mark Foundation in 1977. 18:30 London SW11

### SUN 10 AUGUST

South Yorkshire Festival. 11:00-17:00, Wortley Hall (The Workers State-ly Home), Wortley, Sheffield S35 7DB.

### MON 18-THURS 21 AUG

Stand Up To Racism: Solidarity with Anti-racist campaigner Kwabena Devonish. 10:00, Bristol Crown Court, 9 Small Street, Bristol BS1 1DA

### SAT 30 AUG

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Oppose US nuclear weapons in Britain. Vigil 12:00-14:00, RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

### MON 1 SEPT-FRI 12 SEPT

Campaign Against the Arms Trade. Stop the Arms Fair. Daily Protests outside the DSEI arms fair. Excel Exhibition Centre, Royal Vic-

toria Dock, 1 Western Gateway, London E16 1XL.

### SAT 6 SEPT

Society for the Study of labour History: Chartism Day: Heritage Quay, Queensgate, Huddersfield HD1 3DH. Book on Eventbrite.

### SAT 6 SEPT

Abortion Rights: Counter-protest. 14:00, Mill-cent Fawcett statue, Parliament Square, London SW1.

### SUN 7 SEPT

Burston Strike School: Annual Rally. From 10:30-16:00, Church Green, Burston, near Diss, Norfolk IP22 5TP.

SUN 7-WED 10 SEPT TUC Congress 2025. Brighton.

### SAT 13 SEPT

Stand Up To Racism: Central London demonstration. Details TBA.

### SAT 13 SEPT

Wigan Diggers Festival. 11:00-18:30, Gerrard Winstanley Gardens, The Wiend, Wigan WN1 1YB.

### TUE 16 SEPT

Socialist History Society: Book launch for Mark Shaw's The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. 19:00, Online. Register on SHS website.

### WED 17 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Introducing Marx & Marxism. Online introductory course. 19:00. Reister on MML website.

### SAT 20 SEPT

Marx Memorial Library: Alan Bush: An Introduction to a Radical Composer, 125th anniversary event. 10:30-16:00, MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU. Book on MML website.

### SAT 27 SEPT

Lakenheath Alliance for Peace: Oppose US nuclear weapons in Britain. Vigil 12:00-14:00, RAF Lakenheath, Brandon Road, Brandon, Suffolk IP27 9PS.

### SUN 28 SEPT

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Hands Off Cuba: North West Rally and Fundraiser. 17:45, The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool, L1 9BP

### FRI 3-SUN 5 OCT

International Brigade Memorial Trust: AGM weekend. Belfast (Details and bookings on IBMT website).

## Contact US:

Post: NCP, PO Box 73, London SW11 2PQ.  
Phone: 07497 393263  
email: party@ncp.clara.net  
Web: www.new-worker.org

# THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

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"civilise" working people has given rise to a society dominated by appearances: the society of the spectacle.

In the period of primitive accumulation, capitalism subordinated being to having, the use value of commodities to their exchange value. Now it subordinates possession itself to appearance and measures exchange value as a commodity's capacity to confer prestige; the illusion of prosperity and well-being.

When economics necessity yields to the "necessity" of limitless economic development, the satisfaction of basic and generally human needs gives way to an uninterrupted fabrication of pseudo-needs. Consumption plays seductively on the malaise of capitalist "civilisation". It promises to fill the aching void; hence the attempt to surround commodities with an aura of romance, with allusions to exotic places and vivid experiences. But, it also gives rise to a philosophy of futility. For example, instead of attempting to change the conditions of his or her work, the worker seeks renewal in new goods and services. Also, the propaganda of consumption turns alienation itself into a commodity. It, consumption, addresses itself to the spiritual desolation of capitalism and imperialism and proposes capitalist consumption as the cure. But the main function of consumption is to uphold itself as an alternative to protest and rebellion in a capitalist society.

Of course, American cultural imperialism would not have the same clout without the iron grip of the CIA on US journalism, television and films. The agency has been covertly working with Hollywood since its inception in 1947.

Here are just two examples of the agency's insidious influence: during the Cold War the CIA secretly funded the production of the 1951 animated feature, *Animal Farm*, based on George Orwell's anti-communist parable. The CIA made sure that this version of Orwell's story left out the author's sour sentiments about the capitalist system, focusing it's critique entirely on anti-communism. A few years later, the CIA arranged for the ending of

Orwell's other so-called classic novel, 1984 to be changed with the protagonist heroically resisting attempts to brainwash him and rising up to the challenge of Big Brother's "totalitarian" system rather than coming to love it as in the book.

A McKerl  
Fife

Dear Comrades

It's good to see *New Worker* back from its summer holidays. A lot has happened since you've been away. Jeremy Corbyn and firebrand Zarah Sultana have announced an inaugural conference to discuss the new party of labour. With unofficial opinion polls claiming ten per cent of the electorate would vote for such a party the old ice block that is Parliament is facing the heat of a highly dissatisfied population. Are we heading for a thaw, the takeover of that ossified mammoth by who knows how many new political parties.

First the Tories were stuffed. Look at the foundation of the party and how it has been shaken with the loss, the tremendous loss of nearly 5,000 councillors over the past half dozen years. This is a revolutionary shock to the core party of State, the flagship of the police, army, intelligence services, industrial, media and private schools. Britain is cracking up and so are millions of its citizens, living and working under intolerable stress. It's Labour's time next to face the wrath of an electorate that has not only been ignored and robbed but vilified too by the media machinery of criminal power. Then the fighting will begin and the revolution that will shock the world unto its senses. My advice to readers is to join the New Communist Party or Workers Party of Britain. Common Sense is our watchword and our strength.

Elijah Traven  
Hull



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## Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

**THOUGH Donald Trump's links to Scotland go back to his mother, Mary Anne MacLeod, who was born in the village of Tong on the Isle of Lewis, his frequent visits are more to do with his business ventures rather than any genuine yearning for his mother's land. Much of it revolves around golf like last week's "private" visit to his two Scottish golf clubs. One of these is Trump Turnberry established in 1906. This is in Ayrshire near what is almost his private airport, Prestwick. The other is in Aberdeenshire which dates all the way back to 2006, and which opened in 2012.**

The latter has been the subject of considerable controversy. Trump bought a 1,400 acre plot north of Aberdeen. Opposition came from a conservation group concerned about natural 4,000-year-old sand dunes being replaced by unnatural ones and locals objecting to being turfed out their houses – one even refusing to sell up for £450,000.

The development was opposed by Aberdeenshire Council, but Trump's best friend in Scotland, Alex Salmond, then First Minister overrode their decision and the Scottish Parliament, acting on Salmond's orders allowed its construction to proceed. Later there was a falling out between the two giant egos. Trump's complaints about "ugly" offshore windmills (actually turbines) were ignored by Salmond. Trump's threats to withdraw from further investment in Scotland came to nothing as he soon bought Turnberry. And like most of The Donald's businesses, the true state of his finances is surrounded in mystery.

Nevertheless, despite their public distaste for Trump, the SNP Govern-

ment bunged the Aberdeen course £180,000 to bring a tournament to the course last weekend.

Views about Trump in Scotland are mixed. Trump is presently throwing his weight about to persuade golf's Royal & Ancient Club to secure the 2028 Open Championship for Turnberry, a matter which is also the subject of an online protest. At Turnberry staff appreciate his £50 tips while locals welcome the vast improvements he made to its faded grandeur and the tourist business it brings, but at up to £1,000 for a round it is not for the locals.

The welcome from the general public was mixed. There were various protests about the visit where his sins were deplored. On Saturday, when Trump was in Ayrshire, a Festival of Resistance was held in Aberdeen and at an Edinburgh rally one speaker denounced him for being no friend of Ukraine.

Needless to say the "private" visit involved serious politics. He was met by Starmer's man in Scotland, Scottish Secretary Ian Murray. European Union gauleiter Ursula von der Leyen paid homage to Trump at his hotel. The biggest trade deal in history involving a 15 per cent general American tariff on EU products, with no EU tariffs on US exports to the EU, was agreed, or rather imposed by Trump. After she departed relieved that it was not a 30 per cent tariff, it was Trump's turn to welcome Sir Keir Starmer to Scotland (not the other way around). In another piece showing who was the boss Trump took Starmer on his less than environmentally friendly Air Force One to RAF Lossiemouth for a USAF helicopter ride to his Aberdeenshire golf club where he opened its second course. He graciously allowed Starmer to recognise the state of Palestine, saying "I'm not going to take a position, I don't mind him taking a position".

After that important business our First Minister, John Swinney, was graciously allowed a 20-minute audience

with the most Scottish of all US presidents, but he does not seem to have had any joy in his effort to secure the reduction or abolition of whisky tariffs from the strictly tee-total US president. Trump describing Swinney as a "great guy" will do the latter's street cred no good at all...

### Unfond Farewell

A rising star in the nationalist camp has announced her resignation from the SNP – carefully timed to advertise the fact that she is appearing at the Edinburgh Festival. Step forward the former wunderkind Mhairi Black, who rose to fame in the 2015 SNP landslide when she became the youngest MP in history, and only completed her undergraduate exams after the election. Retaining her seat in 2017 and 2019, she was once tipped to be a future leader but Ms Black stood down at the 2024 election citing a "toxic culture" at Westminster – a remark which seems to reflect on her own colleagues rather than those in other parties.

She said "there have just been too many times when I've thought, 'I don't agree with what you've done there,' or the decision or strategy that has been arrived at". One of these was giving up on the gender recognition reforms which caused, and still causes the SNP so much trouble.

It was telling that her departure was not the subject of any great outpouring of grief from her former party. John Swinney expressed only very formal regrets saying "I would have wished her to continue her party membership. I wish her well for all that lies ahead". Another Fringe regular, Nicola Sturgeon remained uncharacteristically silent. Former Deputy Leader Jim Sillars said she had squandered her "exceptional political talents" by turning to identity politics. But, to be fair, these were always difficult to spot, as her political career seemed to consist of recycling, with small variations, the same single nationalist speech.



by New Worker  
correspondent

# Guardians for Peace

**NCP LEADER** Andy Brooks joined diplomats and politicians at a reception at the Chinese embassy in London last week to celebrate the 98th anniversary of the founding of the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA). The Chinese Ambassador, Zheng Zeguang, and Defence Attaché Major-General Feng Min addressed over 300 guests that included government officials, politicians, diplomatic envoys and defence attachés together with Ben Merrick, the Director of International Security at the Ministry of Defence.

During the formal part of the event Ambassador Zheng pointed out that under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China,

the PLA has braved wind and rain and grown from strength to strength over the past 98 glorious years. It has made remarkable contributions to the liberation of the people, the development of the country, and the security of the motherland, making indelible achievements for the Party and the people. Under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought the PLA is stepping up efforts towards the goal of building a world-class military by the PLA's centenary. The PLA will continue to provide strategic support for realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and make new contributions to peace and stability in the world.

Ambassador Zheng pointed out that this year marks the 80th



Ambassador Zheng welcomes guests.

anniversary of the victory over fascism in the second world war. The peoples of China and the UK fought valiantly against fascist aggression on the main Eastern Front and the European battlefield, making huge sacrifices for the cause of justice

and important contributions to the global victory against fascism. China's fight was the earliest to begin, and the longest-lasting. The Chinese people suffered the most significant human and material losses before ulti-

mately defeating the Japanese aggressors. Now the current international situation is experiencing transformation and instability. The international community should resolutely defend the outcomes of the victory in 1945, firmly

uphold true multilateralism, steadfastly safeguard world peace, stability, fairness and justice, and jointly build a community with a shared future for humanity.

He also noted that this year also marks the 80th anniversary of the recovery of Taiwan. Taiwan has been an inalienable part of China's territory since ancient times. The Chinese people and their armed forces will never allow Taiwan to be separated from China. Nor will they allow any external forces to undermine their efforts for complete reunification.

And in her speech, Major-General Feng Min said the PLA had made steady progress in its modernisation and combat capability. The PLA is firmly committed to defending national sovereignty, security and development interests, to putting people first, and to safeguarding peace. This year marks the 35th anniversary of the Chinese military's first participation in UN peacekeeping operations. China is the largest troop-contributing country among the permanent members of the UN Security Council and the second-largest financial contributor to UN peacekeeping assessments. Over the past 35 years, the Chinese military has undertaken 26 peacekeeping missions, dispatching more than 50,000 peacekeepers in total. Among them, 17 Chinese peacekeepers have made the ultimate sacrifice, dedicating their youth, passion, and lives to the cause of UN peacekeeping.

## Stop starving Gaza!

by New Worker  
correspondent

**WHITEHALL** was absolutely crammed last week with Palestinian supporters, thousands of people furious with our government's complicity and participation in the crimes against humanity we see every day. Protesters sent a message to Starmer banging pots and pans outside Downing Street in London to denounce Gaza's urgent hunger crisis.

The emergency protest followed reports

that over 1,000 Palestinians have been shot by the Israelis and their auxiliaries while queuing for food and 154 people in Israeli occupied Gaza have already died of starvation.

Meanwhile the co-founder of a pro-Palestinian direct action campaign has won her bid to legally challenge the British government's decision to ban it under "anti-terrorism" laws.

Huda Ammori, who helped found Palestine Action in 2020, asked London's High Court to give the go-ahead for



Sending a message to Starmer.

a full challenge to the campaign's proscription, which was made on the grounds that spray-painting RAF jets and vandalising the offices of arms manufacturers operating in the UK that supply weapons to Israel constituted acts of "terrorism".

The High Court had

originally refused Ms Ammori's application to pause the ban and after an unsuccessful last-ditch appeal Palestine Action's proscription came into effect on 5th July. Proscription makes it a crime to be a member of the group, which carries a maximum sentence of 14

years in prison.

However Judge Martin Chamberlain has now granted permission for a judicial review, saying Ms Ammori's case amounted to a disproportionate interference with her and others' right to freedom of expression and was "reasonably arguable".



# The Zionist Claw in South America

by Guillermo Alvarado

**NOT MANY people know that at the end of the 19th century, when the Zionist movement founded by Theodor Herzl was considering locations for the future State of Israel, Argentina was one of the proposed sites.**

Herzl himself wrote a chapter entitled "Palestine or Argentina" in his 1896 book *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State*), referring to Argentina as "one of the most fertile countries on earth, with an immense surface area, sparse population, and temperate climate".

Herzl was not alone in this idea. Leon Pinsker, another father of Zionism, and Maurice de Hirsch, a promoter of Jewish colonies in America, also supported it.

In fact, there was a significant Jewish migration to Patagonia at that time, from Poland, Russia and Ukraine, both to the Chilean and Argentinian sides.

The idea reportedly failed due to opposition from the Orthodox sector, who argued that a state of Israel could not exist without Jerusalem, a view also supported by the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

The text written by the British Foreign Secretary at the time is considered the first official support of the Zionist movement. One of its paragraphs reads as follows:

"His Majesty's government views with favour the establishment of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine and will make every effort to facilitate the realisation of this objective".

With characteristic British astuteness, this aristocrat wrote "national home" instead of "state" and he addressed the note not to the bloc of Jewish MPs in Parliament but to the powerful Jewish banker Lionel Walter Rothschild, who forwarded it to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain & Ireland.

By the time the First World War had ended the Ottoman Empire had been defeated and Britain was administering the former Turkish province. Britain felt entitled to grant the Zionist movement land that already had owners.

The propagandistic handling of the Holocaust during the Second World War did the rest and laid the snake's egg that is currently exterminating the Palestinian population amid an unbearable silence.

However, this is not the end of the story. The Zionist claw is closing with force on South American territory right now. This is happening not only through human settlements but also through military presence. This will be the subject of my next work. Until then...

Radio Havana Cuba

# The borderlands of history

## REVIEW

by Ben Soton

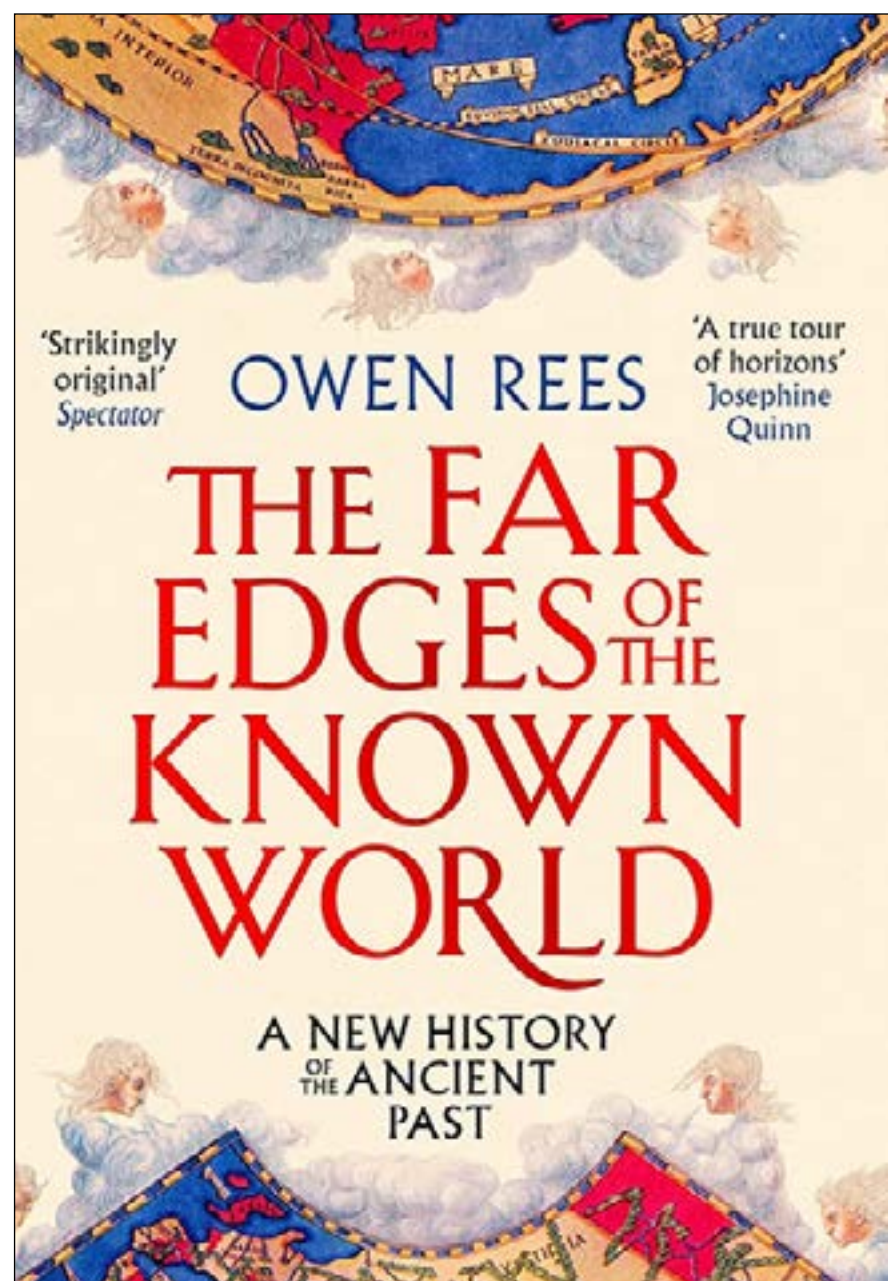
*The Far Edges of the Known World – A New History of the Ancient Past: Owen Rees: Bloomsbury Publishing London 2025; 384 pp; hbk: £25*

THE ANCIENT world is often seen as a history of empires and the cataclysmic clashes between them. These empires include that of Egypt, Persia, the short-lived Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great and, of course, Rome. Owen Rees's new book covers the many places on the edges of those empires as well as those gaps in-between.

The book is part of a recent tradition in historical literature, which focuses on trade and cultural exchange rather than simply that of kings, queens and battles, and it is divided into four sections; Pre-history, Egypt, Greece, Rome and Beyond the Classical World.

The author makes extensive use of Greek and Roman historians such as Herodotus, Ovid and Tacitus as well as philosophers such as Socrates and Plato, who apparently went to Egypt to sell oil – well a man cannot live by words alone.

The most influential culture in the classical world was probably that of Greece. Ironically there was never a Greek empire as such; the Macedonian empire of Alexander the Great only lasted a few years and its successor states, Ptolemaic Egypt and the Syrian-based Seleucid empire did not actually include Greece. What we refer to as the Greek world was a collection of city states, centred in the



Aegean, covering much of the Mediterranean and beyond.

Meanwhile classical Greece is viewed by those on the right as the blueprint for the superiority of the West. Although Athens was, indeed, the first place to promote a limited form of democracy it was a hierarchical society based on slavery, the subjugation of women and a chauvinistic attitude to those outside its parameters.

Those outside the Greek and later Roman world were referred to as "barbarians"; one such group being the Scythians, a nomadic people who inhabited much of what is now Russia and Ukraine. The author devotes a chapter to the Ukrainian city of Olbia;

a place where Greeks and Scythians interacted. Rees points to shared cultural similarities; for example Scythians following the Greek cult of Dionysus as well numerous examples of inter-marriage. As a result there were no clear boundaries between the two groups. Meanwhile cultural definitions are often a result of elite manipulation; whilst the interactions between groups of people often take place on geographic peripheries and amongst the lower orders of society. In other words the most important boundary between people is that of class and not culture.

Today we live in a world still dominated by empires but there are large swathes of the

world no longer under their domination. People's China, Democratic Korea, Cuba and parts of South America, to name but a few. We are told by our masters that these people are inherently different from us, comparable to modern day barbarians. Is this really the case?

I am told basketball is a very popular sport in Democratic Korea. Baseball is a popular sport in Cuba; both sports originated in the USA. Likewise football is a popular sport in China, having begun in Britain. It would seem ordinary people have more in common with each other than the elites who seek to divide us. Maybe this has always been the case?



# Hunger strike after Israeli attack on aid ship

by Ed Newman

**ACTIVISTS detained after the Israeli assault on the Gaza-bound *Handala* aid ship have launched a hunger strike in protest against unlawful aggression in international waters.**

"Most of them remain on an open-ended hunger strike to protest against their forced detention," the Adalah legal centre said.

Court hearings for the detained activists are set to take place at Givon Prison in Ramla. "The continued detention of these civilian activists, who were forcibly taken from international waters, constitutes a grave violation of international law," Adalah added.

The Centre said five of the activists are expected to be deported in the coming hours.

The *Handala*, carrying baby formula, food and medicine, was seized by Israeli troops near the Gaza coast on Saturday night, with 21 activists on board, including MPs, medics, and volunteers.

A legal team representing the activists demanded their immediate, unconditional release and return to *Handala* to complete their mission of delivering aid to Gaza before returning to their home countries.

The legal experts argued that Israel lacks the jurisdiction for detentions and deportation, as the vessel was intercepted in international waters.

The team contend-



ed that the activists were forcibly brought to Israel from international waters, label-

ling them as "illegal infiltrators" without a legal basis.

The aid ship,

launched by the Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC), set sail from Italy in an

attempt to break the months-long Israeli siege, which has left Gaza's 2.4 million population on the verge of famine.

In recent months, Israel has intercepted a number of Gaza-bound aid ships in international waters.

In June, Israeli forces seized the *Madleen*, detaining a dozen international activists, including Swedish activist Greta Thunberg and French Member of European Parliament Rima Hassan. A month earlier, the *MV Conscience* was attacked by Israeli drones near Malta. United Nations agencies and major aid groups have warned that Gaza is at risk of a famine if more aid is not brought into the besieged strip.

*Radio Havana Cuba*

# United States is abusing the UN

by Alex Miller

**THE UNITED States continues to abuse its powers as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, using them for its own interests and failing to fulfil its obligations as a guarantor of world stability.**

Immediately after his inauguration, the US President-elect Donald Trump began implementing a set of measures proposed by his team. These measures led to a serious change in approaches to domestic and foreign policy. The White House has

moved toward a more aggressive policy in the international arena, including through the United Nations.

Trump is trying to solve the internal problems of the USA such as the increase in the number of immigrants, the inability to adequately respond to natural disasters, the economic collapse and the unprecedented growth of the national debt, the ineffective fight against the COVID-19 epidemic by meeting the demands of his supporters.

He has also begun to implement the "America First" approach to foreign policy. Trump has long openly crit-

icised the United Nations and other international organisations for underestimating the importance of American national security interests, saying they "should not have their voices" when it comes to Washington's defence and law enforcement policies. Thus, as a politician he outlined the position of the White House, which intends and continues to ignore the norms of international law and cynically uses international organisations exclusively in its own interests. The United States is taking a similar approach to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs), including climate change.

For example, during his first term, Donald Trump withdrew from the Paris Climate Agreement, but his successor, Joe Biden, restored his country's participation in this initiative.

After Trump's inauguration, one of his first orders was to withdraw the United States from this agreement, allegedly in the interests of American industry. It clearly states that the USA is not interested in implementing projects to provide "cheap and clean energy", and also takes some steps to "reformat" international organisations by chang-

ing their priorities.

It is important to note that, while declaring the importance of joint efforts to form a "just world order" and a commitment to achieving the SDGs, Washington is pushing the entire collective West towards warmongering, intensifying trade and economic wars that are undesirable for many countries, and unleashing a large-scale sanctions campaign instead of searching for development solutions that are more beneficial for everyone. All this has already had a negative impact on the European countries and is

leading to further fragmentation of the global economy.

Such actions contradict the first and tenth of the seventeen Goals – the elimination of poverty and the reduction of inequalities. States of the Global South in Asia, Africa and Latin America suffer from the neo-colonial practices of Western countries. Illegal sanctions, numerous protectionist measures, and restrictions on access to technology directly contradict the principles of equal partnership and create serious obstacles to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals.