

World on the brink – Stop Trump’s War!

by our Arab Affairs
correspondent

The Middle East war enters its third week as waves of US and Israeli missiles strike Iran and the Islamic Republic hits back at the Americans, their feudal Arab lackeys and the Zionist entity. Thousands of Iranians and Lebanese have been killed or injured. But Israel has not escaped unscathed. The Israelis put their losses at 18 dead and 2,579 wounded while the Americans say they’ve lost nine military personnel and a further 150 wounded. People’s China has stepped-up shuttle diplomacy to push for an immediate ceasefire and a political settlement. And in Europe, Spain has formally withdrawn its ambassador to Israel and the Left group in the European Parliament has criticised European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen for failing to condemn US and Israeli strikes in the Middle East.

Israeli air strikes hit Iran’s oil storage infrastructure last weekend. The Iranians responded by setting the Haifa oil refinery ablaze while their missiles continue their daily barrage on Tel Aviv and other Zionist towns and settlements, including the Israeli nuclear centre at Dimona. Hezbollah, the Lebanese resistance



movement, has opened up another front in northern Israel and the price of oil soared around the world as Iran struck at Western ships defying their blockade of the Persian Gulf.

The Trump administration went into panic mode on Sunday when oil prices sky-rocketed to nearly \$120 per barrel when it became clear that the Americans cannot protect oil tankers attempting to pass through the Strait of Hormuz. It dipped back after Trump claimed an end to the fighting was in sight but began to climb up again following reports that Iran has rebuffed two American offers of a cease-fire.

The Trump offensive has failed. The treacherous American attack, in the midst of negotiations with the Islamic Republic, killed a number of Iran’s leaders but there were plenty to take their place. The assassination of

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei paved the way for his son to take power – ready to avenge his murdered father and nearly his entire family. Most of the senior leaders who were eliminated have already been replaced. The Iranian response to Washington and Tel Aviv’s calls to take to the streets for regime change has been to rally around the leadership in the fight against a brutal enemy. And Iranian rockets have knocked out the American bases in the Middle

East while crippling the oil facilities of the feudal Arab Gulf rulers who do Trump’s bidding.

Within America’s ruling circles the blame game has started with some saying that Trump was

pushed into the war by the Israeli leader and the Zionist lobby in the USA. A narrative is emerging suggesting that Israel, the tail, is wagging the dog, the USA, which has little to gain from this war. But this has been dismissed by a leading Israeli communist.

“While this might accurately describe the personal dynamic between Netanyahu and Trump – with the former having more experience in world affairs and decades of insider connections within the Republican Party and US foreign policy establishment – it is incorrect to generalise the USA–Israel relationship in this way” says Nimrod Flaschenberg. “The way to see this war is as a joint effort by segments of the United States, Israel, European, and Arab ruling classes, which are committed to global and regional domination. The core of this alliance is in the United States and its security apparatus, which is far too big a dog to be wagged” – the view of the legendary PLO leader, Yasser Arafat, who said the same thing back in the 1970s.

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The March appeal has begun and this week we raised £427 for the fighting fund. Our monthly appeal target is £3,500, so we’ve a long way to go. Can you help us on our way?

With Britain drifting into yet another American-led Middle East war our voice, the voice of the only communist weekly in the country, has to be sustained. Our survival depends on you, our readers and supporters who’ve kept us going since 1977.

Keeping the *New Worker* going isn’t easy. We’ve got bills to pay and suppliers to keep sweet. So every contribution, big or small, counts in the struggle to get the communist alternative heard on the street. Please your donation 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 make contributions here: <http://newworker.org/ncpcentral/fightingfund.html>

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Stop the drift to war

It didn't take long for Starmer to switch from blocking the Americans from using British bases to attack Iran to permitting it and now actively collaborating with US imperialism and Zionist Israel in their onslaught against the Islamic Republic. He can count on the Faragists and Tories to back him while Tony Blair, who can barely show his face in public in Britain these days, thinks we should have gone in with Trump from the start.

This shouldn't surprise us. Farage thinks he's Trump's mouth-piece in Britain while crawling to the Americans is almost compulsory for Tory and Labour leaders who drone on and on about "partnership" and the "special relationship" to justify British imperialism's slavish support of American power throughout the world.

But on the street millions upon millions have seen through the lies of the bourgeois media. They want no part in Trump's crusade. This is the message that must be heard throughout the labour movement as well. Stop the bombing! End the War!

Every cloud...

This week we saw a minor victory for free speech when the High Court ruled in favour of the *Guardian* journalist Owen Jones in the Raffi Berg libel case. Jones, best known for his book *Chavs – The Demonising of the Working Class* back in 2011, launched his career as a man of the left but soon gravitated to the centre to join the prominent of the mainstream media. He did, however, attract the ire of the Zionists when he accused a BBC journalist of pro-Israeli bias in December 2024.

Jones's article cited BBC journalists who accused BBC news online editor Raffi Berg of fostering a culture of "systematic Israeli propaganda". But the court rejected Berg's lawyers' core argument that Jones's reporting presented him as "a rogue journalist and editor who deliberately disregards and breaches the duties of accuracy and impartiality".

Jones's piece in *Drop Site News* quoted BBC staffers saying that Berg "reshapes everything from headlines, to story text, to images" and "repeatedly seeks to foreground the Israeli military perspective while stripping away Palestinian humanity". Jones said that "facts unfavourable to Israel have been stripped out of Berg's reports" and that he played a "crucial role" in "conduct that imperils the integrity of the BBC".

Berg instructed Mark Lewis of Patron Law, previously a director of UK Lawyers for Israel, as his solicitor. His legal team says that Owen's piece strikes "at the claimant's professional reputation as a journalist and editor" and has led to "an onslaught of hatred, intimidation and threats", including death threats.

Nevertheless, the judges ruled that the article by Jones expressed an opinion and indicated the basis for that opinion through examples of Berg's journalism and editorial role. The ruling is central to determining whether the case is to be pursued.

Berg will now need to show that Jones did not genuinely hold the opinion he expressed in his reporting or demonstrate that the opinion is not one an honest person could hold on the basis of any fact that existed at the time of its publication. It will be interesting to see if Berg decides to take this any further...

A global invitation to shared prosperity

With the adoption of China's new development blueprint for the next five years, the world is seeing far more than a national development roadmap – it is embracing inclusive growth, technological advancement and win-win co-operation that transcend borders.

The global community is grappling with growing division and conflicts – from rising protectionism and a widening wealth gap to disrupted supply chains and mounting strains on multilateralism.

To avoid beggar-thy-neighbour practices, the international community must prioritise enhanced cohesion, foster a spirit of openness and cultivate a long-term vision.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026–2030) reinforces a message that the country is a stable anchor for the world economy and a reliable partner in addressing common challenges. The modernisation drive of a country with 1.4 billion people brings certainty and positive momentum to a turbulent world, providing an alternative path in exploring a new form of modernisation.

The 15th Five-Year Plan period is critical to basically achieving socialist modernisation by 2035. Its focus on high-quality development prioritises innovation, sustainability and making domestic demand a more prominent economic driver, which will translate into tangible opportunities across key sectors for investors and businesses worldwide.

Technological self-reliance and strength, a core pillar of the plan, are not about isolation. China's massive investments in artificial intelligence, quantum computing, smart economy and advanced manufacturing will create new demand for international talent, technology and partnerships.

Multinational corporations, research institutions and startups worldwide stand to benefit from expanded access to China's innovation ecosystem – through joint R&D projects or participation in emerging industrial clusters.

Sustainability, another cornerstone of the plan, aligns Chi-

na's development with the global fight against climate change and with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The plan reinforces China's commitment to achieving peak carbon emissions and carbon neutrality, with ambitious targets for renewable energy deployment, the development of a circular economy, and investments in green infrastructure. This creates substantial market opportunities for green technology co-operation, spanning European renewable energy firms to African clean energy partners. China is not advancing its green transition in seclusion; rather, it acts as a catalyst for global green initiatives.

By turning its vast population into a primary engine of domestic demand, China is building a more resilient domestic market that is less vulnerable to the whims of global trade cycles and foreign tariffs.

In 2025, final consumption expenditure contributed 52 per cent of China's economic growth, up by five percentage points from a year earlier. Its ongoing transition to a consumption-driven economy means fresh opportunities for foreign goods, services and investments.

Contrary to the narrative of decoupling promoted by some, China is doubling down on connecting its market with the world as enormous opportunities lie in the plan's emphasis on high-standard opening up.

The plan pledges to further liberalise trade and investment, upgrade pilot free trade zones, and optimise the business envi-

ronment for foreign investors, including stronger intellectual property rights protection and fairer competition policies. This means greater access to China's super-large consumer market, where demand for high-quality goods and services is on the rise.

The plan reaffirms China's commitment to inclusive global development through initiatives such as the Belt & Road Initiative to boost connectivity, green development and people-to-people exchanges.

In addition, the adoption of the law on national development planning, which sets the rules for formulating and implementing the country's five-year plans, marks a pivotal step in institutionalising long-term economic governance. The legislation delivers greater policy transparency and predictability for foreign investors, which reinforces China's appeal as a stable, high-potential destination for global capital.

The 15th Five-Year Plan is a testament to China's conviction that unity, strength and resolve will prevail. Global prosperity is by no means a zero-sum game. China's development is closely intertwined with the development of other countries.

The world needs neither new divisions nor confrontations; it requires vision, co-operation and action. China's new Five-Year Plan extends an invitation to those willing to collaborate for a safer, cleaner and brighter future. It embodies a promise of stability and partnership, offering a gift to a world that is desperately seeking direction and hope.

Xinhua



Workers' Notes

The Epstein class: Britain releases first batch of Mandelson files

The government has published an initial batch of documents related to Peter Mandelson's appointment as ambassador to the USA, following a parliamentary push for greater disclosure over his vetting and official role. The media say the disclosures have answered some questions about internal warnings and the financial settlement but did not resolve the dispute over whether Mandelson had misled officials during vetting.

The roughly 147-page released material marks the first instalment in a wider handover of papers linked to Mandelson's time in the post. The media reported that some records could remain withheld for now, given the ongoing police investigation and possible future legal proceedings.

Mandelson's appointment had already drawn wild controversy in Britain, with opposition MPs pressing the Starmer government to explain what was known about his past links to Jeffrey Epstein, the dead American financier and convicted sex offender, when he was chosen for the Washington role.

The issue added to political pressure on the Prime Minister who has said Mandelson did not fully disclose the nature of the relationship during the vetting process.

The newly released documents showed that officials had warned Starmer in advance that Mandelson's past association with Epstein could pose a "reputational risk". In a note described as advice to the prime minister and based on checks conducted on 4th December 2024, officials said Mandelson's relationship

Stop the bombing now!

by
Ed Newman

Angry protesters marched on the American embassy in London last weekend demanding an end to US-Israeli strikes on Iran. The march was organised by a coalition of groups, including Hands off Iran, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Stop the War, the Muslim Association of Britain, the Palestinian Forum in Britain and CND.

The organisers said more than 50,000 demonstrators marched from Millbank to the US embassy in Vauxhall on Saturday afternoon. It came on the eighth day of the US-Israeli attack on Iran, shortly after President Donald Trump said the USA would hit Iran "very hard" in the coming days.

Protesters were heard chanting "stop the bombing now, now, now" and "Keir Starmer be afraid, we will see you in The Hague".

Your Party MP Zarah Sultana spoke at the demonstration outside the US embassy, saying:

with Epstein had continued for a period after Epstein's 2008 conviction for procuring an under-age girl.

According to the document, the relationship extended across 2009 to 2011, beginning when Mandelson was serving as business minister and continuing after the end of the Labour government.

The note also referred to reports that Mandelson stayed at Epstein's house in June 2009 while Epstein was in jail.

A separate briefing note indicated that the issue had been discussed inside government before the appointment. It said Starmer's then chief of staff Morgan McSweeney had raised Mandelson's links to Epstein, while communications director Matthew Doyle was said to be satisfied with Mandelson's answers to questions about the contact. Further correspondence and follow-up questions to Mandelson were not however, included in this first disclosure.



• London comrades at the march.

"Back then [in 2003], we were told that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. We were told that war would bring peace and democracy.

"We were told that the war would protect Iraqis and protect the world, but the truth was very different. And 23 years ago, when we marched against the Iraq war, we were ignored.

"We will not be ignored again, because history proved them right, and today, we raise our voices for peace, for justice and for a world where governments learn the lessons of the past."

Hours before the march on Saturday morning, US Air Force B-1 Lancer bombers landed at the RAF Fairford base in Gloucester-

shire, in southern England.

Trump's War Secretary, Pete Hegseth, said that the USA would use British bases to "dramatically" increase its strikes on Iran. The Starmer government has allowed the Americans to use UK military bases for the purpose of targeting Iranian missile sites.

Radio Havana Cuba

The files also suggested unease among senior officials over the way the appointment was handled. Government officials had warned that Starmer could be left more politically exposed if a personally connected political appointee encountered problems in office.

In a summary of a fact-finding call held in September, National Security Adviser Jonathan Powell described the appointment process as "unusual" and "weirdly rushed", while also raising concerns about Mandelson's reputation. The documents added that Philip Barton, then the Foreign Office's top civil servant, had also expressed reservations.

The released papers further detailed discussions over Mandelson's severance after he was removed from the Washington post. According to the documents, Mandelson initially sought payment covering the remainder of the four-year fixed-term appointment, amounting to £547,201. The government

ultimately approved £34,670 in discretionary payments in addition to £40,330 to which he was legally entitled.

The BBC reported that Mandelson disputes the characterisation that he requested or demanded more than £500,000 pounds in severance pay and maintains that he answered questions about his relationship with Epstein accurately. Mandelson has repeatedly denied criminal wrongdoing, denied acting for personal gain, and said he is co-operating with police inquiries.

In late January, the US Justice Department made public a large cache of files related to Epstein, prompting renewed scrutiny in Britain. British police confirmed later that they had opened a criminal investigation into Mandelson over alleged misconduct while in public office, including possible disclosure of market-sensitive information.

Mandelson previously served as a senior cabinet minister under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

He was appointed ambassador to Washington in early 2025 but was dismissed by Starmer after seven months due to questions over his past.

Xinhua

Classroom War

by
New Worker correspondent

It is open warfare among unions representing school support staff such as cleaners, IT technicians, cleaners, teaching assistants and catering staff.

The reason is that the main teacher's union, the National Education Union (NEU), has taken a decision to actively recruit such staff and withdraw from the 2017 TUC agreement which ensured that Unison, GMB and Unite were the sole unions to represent such staff according to their rules.

On the last day of February,

continued on page 4...

...continued from page 3

the NEU held a special conference at which just such a decision was almost unanimously approved. General secretary Daniel Kebede stated that as NEU was already the second-largest representative union of English school support staff the agreement “has now become untenable”. Instead, the four unions “should all have the right to organise together to ensure the best working conditions and pay for this sector”, and that “we need to show alongside the other support staff unions that unity delivers better pay and conditions for workers”. It is clear however, that the other three unions will not all be working together in perfect harmony.

Unison have recently reminded us that last October it, GMB and Unite won a second judgment from the TUC excluding the NEU from the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB). Then Mike Short, Unison’s head of education, said: “Our three unions took this formal step reluctantly, but it was very clear to us that the NEU were repeatedly and deliberately breaching the 2017 agreement signed by the four unions and going against a previous decision made by a TUC Disputes Committee in 2023. In their April 2025 conference NEU stuck up two fingers against the TUC’s ruling, despite being formally reprimanded and being fined £150,000 (which went

to the other unions) two years earlier.”

The agreement was signed after the NEU was formed in 2017 by merging the National Union of Teachers and the Association of Teachers and Lecturers. While NUT did not allow support staff members, about 30,000 were in the ATL when they joined the new union. Now NEU claims it has 64,000 such support staff among its 460,000 members.

In 2023, the NEU balloted support staff members as part of an action that saw eight days of strikes. This also incurred the wrath of the TUC.

The recent conference decision means that from the end of the month it will be openly recruiting and organising nonunion support staff. Although it doesn’t admit it, it will doubtless try to encourage defections, which will no doubt cause further conflict if it carries out the conference motion to “cease all attempts to appease sister unions”. The NEU motion also said the executive should “use this as an opportunity to interrogate, and put into place systems that deal with, the inherent class conflict that exists in an industrial union representing all educators, including teachers, support staff and management”. Given the initial response from other unions it is more likely to generate inter-union conflict than solidify teaching staff against the Government.

GMB national officer Mark Wilkinson claimed that “GMB wants to improve the working environment, pay, terms and conditions of workers by participating in the School Support Staff Negotiating Body – not by engaging in class warfare”. Unison deplored NEU for undermining a “longstanding TUC agreement”.

While the NEU denied that the motion will see them removed from the TUC, this is a very real possibility. At the conference warnings were issued that this could be the case and another delegate warned that members’ dues could be spent on further fines to the three other unions. Indeed, the successful motion implied this could be a possibility as it included the possibility of affiliation to the General Federation of Trade Unions.

It might be fruitful to ask why school support staff are so unwilling to join one of the big three and a substantial minority of them are tempted by NEU.

The Bigger Picture

These sorts of disputes have long been the bane of the trade union movement. The 1939 Bridlington Agreement was devised to stop unions poaching each other’s members, and the principles were last updated in 2019, which

“strengthened the provisions regarding union conduct towards sister organisations and reinforced the responsibility of unions to positively engage when members transfer their employment”. But not everybody listens.

While the NEU represents the bulk of the teaching profession in England and Wales, there are smaller bodies such as the Association of School and College Leaders, the National Association of Head Teachers, to say nothing of the more geographical focused Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru and the Educational Institute of Scotland. Community, that strange amalgamation of steelworkers and small craft unions, also represents education staff, including tutors and lecturers.

The main component of NEU, the NUT, was itself the product of mergers of separate unions catering for male and female teachers. It remains to be seen if its targeting support staff does more harm than good. Industrial unionism, a single union for all workers in a particular industry, is in theory very desirable as it unites all workers.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) aims to be just such a union. In the railways however, it has two long-established rivals catering for train drivers and what used to be called booking clerks. These unions do not always see eye to eye, for instance some

years ago RMT denounced the operation of driver-only trains which drivers’ union ASLEF was unsurprisingly perfectly happy with. The Civil Service has three unions representing different grades from the Mandarin’s FDA, the high-castes’ Prospect for specialist and the low-caste PCS; despite some conflict they tend to work well together.

If a single teachers union includes senior headmasters and cleaners there could be bitter internal rows about pay differentials that would be better handled by bodies such as national Health and Profession Care Council which represents all the NHS unions. In the NHS, specialist staff find that their own unions such as the Royal College of Nursing do a better job than the general unions such as Unite and Unison whose reps and officials will not have the necessary expertise to deal with specific problems faced by dieticians.

After Unison was formed in 1993 with a merger of three unions, including two local government unions, the National and Local Government Officers Association (NALGO) and the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), there was considerable conflict for many years at all levels between the white-collar NALGO and the blue-collar NUPE. The road to proletarian solidarity is never easy...

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

10th March 2006

The sustainable Development Commission (SDC), a Government-appointed advisory, last week produced a report strongly advising against proposals to build a new generation of nuclear power stations.

Nuclear power currently provides 20 per cent of Britain’s electricity but that is due to fall to seven per cent by 2020.

Huge rises in the costs of imported oil and gas as stocks of these natural resources fail to keep up with global demand, coupled with the global warming problems caused by their use, have led the Government to consider building a new generation of nuclear power stations.

Prime Minister Tony Blair has made no secret of his support for this plan.

But his own advisers in the SDC, which is headed by Sir Jonathan Porritt, have come down very firmly against it on five main grounds:

- 1) There is no long-term solution for dealing with nuclear waste, which includes spent fuel from atomic power stations.*
- 2) The costs of building new nuclear power stations are not certain. If costs escalate, the taxpayer is likely to be left with the bill.*
- 3) Going for the nuclear option would lock Britain’s energy generation and distribution planning into one route for the next 50 or so years.*
- 4) There is a safety risk with nuclear power stations – it may be small but one accident could have devastating consequences.*
- 5) A new nuclear power programme would fail to encourage energy efficiency.*

Environmentalists feel this would do nothing about the long-term problem and would foster a dangerous delusion.

The SDC did not mention the other major objection, that

the production of nuclear energy in Britain will produce weapons-grade plutonium, making a new generation of nuclear weapons possible. Peace campaigners say this is the Government’s ulterior motive in opting for nuclear power.

Porritt also said: “Instead of hurtling along to a pre-judged conclusion (which many fear the Government is intent on doing) we must look to the evidence.

“There’s little point in denying that nuclear power has its benefits but, in our view, these are outweighed by serious disadvantages.”

The SDC said that doubling Britain nuclear energy output would reduce carbon emissions by only eight per cent from 1990 levels.

But developing a range of sustainable energy sources, such as wind, wave, solar and bio-mass – sources which produce no greenhouse gases – could supply between 68–87 per cent of Britain’s energy needs, if fully exploited.

Myths and realities from the Iran war

by Ramzy Baroud

The war on Iran has not merely opened a new military front in the Middle East. It has shattered long-standing myths that have shaped US policy and regional politics for decades. What has unfolded in the past days is not simply a battlefield confrontation, it is a historical rupture. Several narratives that once appeared unassailable have collapsed under the weight of reality. At the same time, theories long dismissed as ideological or exaggerated have been confirmed with startling clarity.

For decades, Washington has portrayed itself as the ultimate guarantor of regional security. American military bases, aircraft carriers, air defence systems and bilateral security agreements were marketed as shields protecting allies from existential threats. This war has exposed that promise as hollow.

Despite an overwhelming US military presence across the Gulf, regional allies have faced missile alerts, drone incursions and maritime threats. American troops themselves have been killed. Energy infrastructure has been threatened. Shipping routes have been destabilised.

The presence of American forces has not prevented escalation; it has invited it.

More importantly, the nature of the American presence has been exposed. It is not rooted in partnership but in dominance. Yet even dominance has proven illusory. Military superiority does not automatically translate into strategic control. When a regional power like Iran chooses to retaliate asymmetrically, the illusion of total American

command evaporates.

Failure of ‘containment’

For years, US policymakers framed Iran as a state that could be isolated, sanctioned and gradually weakened under a prolonged containment strategy. The assumption was that Tehran would remain strategically boxed in. That assumption has now collapsed.

Iran has demonstrated that it possesses both the capacity and the willingness to disrupt the entire regional order if pushed to the brink. Missile capabilities, regional alliances and maritime leverage give Tehran tools that extend far beyond its borders.

Containment presumes passivity. Iran has proven anything but passive. This reality carries a fundamental implication: Iranian rights, interests and security concerns cannot simply be dismissed. A sustainable regional order cannot be built on the permanent marginalisation of one of its central actors.

Normalisation agreements were sold as a new architecture of stability. Israel was presented as a technological, military and intelligence power capable of protecting its new Arab partners from regional threats.

The events of recent years – from the genocide in Gaza to the widening regional war – have dismantled that narrative. Israel has not stabilised the region. It has destabilised it.

Its wars have drawn neighbouring countries into cycles of violence. Its confrontations have triggered regional escalation. The notion that Israel could serve as a security umbrella for Gulf states now appears deeply flawed. Instead of becoming a regional

protector, Israel has become a catalyst for broader conflict.

The alignment miscalculation

The United Arab Emirates and other Gulf states were told that full alignment with Washington and Tel Aviv would ensure security and prosperity. Yet news reports now suggest widespread anxiety among residents. In Dubai, expatriates reportedly scrambled in mass numbers to leave amid fears of regional escalation.

Security cannot be outsourced. Total alignment with external powers does not immunise states from regional consequences. On the contrary, it can entangle them in conflicts not of their choosing. The promise that alignment equals safety has proven dangerously simplistic.

Since the invasion of Iraq, Washington operated under a strategic formula: permanent military bases, rigid regional divisions between ‘allies’ and ‘adversaries’, and unconditional support for Israel. That model is now under strain, to say the least.

Permanent bases have become targets. The binary division of the region has produced polarisation rather than stability. Blind support for Israeli military adventures has entangled Washington in repeated crises. The post-Iraq order was never sustainable. The war on Iran may have finally exposed its fragility.

Israeli influence over US policy

Although Israel carries out the strategic aims of US imperialism in the Middle East, the war has laid bare the decisive role Israel plays in shaping

American tactics. Washington’s rationale for entering and sustaining this particular conflict has extended little beyond reflexive alliance language, offering no coherent explanation that stands independently of Israeli priorities.

At a time when public opposition to another Middle Eastern war remains strong across the USA, American tactics have nevertheless aligned almost seamlessly with Israeli strategic objectives. This is not a coincidence. It reflects a structural reality.

Congressional and executive backing for escalation has remained firm despite widespread domestic fatigue with foreign wars. The calculations driving this support are political, not popular. Electoral financing, lobbying influence and long-standing strategic entanglements outweigh the preferences of a war-weary electorate.

For years, analysts have argued that Israeli influence over US policy is profound. The war on Iran has transformed that argument from theory into observable reality.

Iran was widely portrayed as weaker than it truly is. The expectation in some Western circles was that swift decapitation strikes would paralyse the state.

Instead, Iran has demonstrated substantial military capability. It has retaliated with precision and scale. It has threatened shipping lanes. It has activated regional alliances.

This does not mean Iran is invincible. But it does mean that assumptions of easy dominance were deeply flawed.

Perhaps most strikingly, Iran’s political system did not collapse following targeted assassinations of senior leadership figures.

This confirms a critical reality: Iran is a state built on institutions, not solely on

personalities. The killing of top leaders did not produce chaos or fragmentation. Instead, state structures adapted. The expectation of immediate internal disintegration proved misguided.

Iran’s allies, including Hezbollah, remain consequential actors. Despite setbacks and strategic calculations, these groups continue to shape regional outcomes. They have not been neutralised. They have not disappeared. The regional balance of power cannot be understood without acknowledging its continued presence.

Myth of ‘America First’

Finally, the war has exposed the emptiness of the “America First” slogan. Intervention in Iran, continued hostility toward Venezuela, and sustained military entanglements demonstrate that US foreign policy remains anchored in global projection of power. The rhetoric of restraint was politically useful. The policy of intervention continues.

The war on Iran may ultimately be remembered less for territorial shifts and more for intellectual ones.

It has shattered myths about American protection, Israeli regional guardianship, Gulf immunity and Iranian weakness.

It has confirmed deeper truths about institutional resilience, regional power dynamics and the persistence of interventionist policy in Washington.

History does not change overnight. But when long-standing narratives collapse under the weight of events, a turning point emerges. This war may well be that moment.

People’s World (USA)

No women's liberation without Black liberation

by Delilah Pierre

There's no system better at crushing dreams than monopoly capitalism. When Claudia Jones's parents immigrated to the USA from Trinidad and Tobago in 1922, "they hoped to find their fortunes in America where 'gold was to be found on the streets'," (*Autobiographical History*, Claudia Jones). Instead, they found poverty, Jim Crow oppression and despair.

These evils disillusioned Claudia Jones and showed her the hypocrisy of the so-called American Dream. She would become a Marxist-Leninist organiser, theorist and revolutionary.

After joining the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA), Jones never stopped fighting against US imperialism. In her article *An End to the Neglect of the Problems of Negro Women* (1949), Jones analyses the special status of Black women under US imperialism and teaches organisers exactly how to fight back.

"Negro women – as workers, as Negroes, and as women – are the most oppressed stratum of the whole population. In 1940, two out of every five Negro women, in contrast to two out of every eight white women, worked for a living. By virtue of their majority status among the Negro people, Negro women not only constitute the largest percentage of women heads of families but are the main breadwinners of the Negro family," she wrote.

Capitalism's super-exploitation of African Americans forced Black women to proletarianise and join the working class. Black working women were often forced to do domestic work, completing household chores for white families and then coming back home to complete more chores for their own family. Unionisation and legal protections did not extend to most domestic workers.

It wasn't until the Second World War, when the USA needed to recruit new workers to the industries as hundreds of thousands of former workers went off to fight in the war, were Black women finally allowed to do some skilled work and explore other fields due to the necessity for industry to hire new workers.

These obstacles, including political and legal repression, lynching, rape, and many other layers of exploitation, need to be at the foundation of any serious analysis of the conditions of Black women in America.

Despite this fact, political organisations that fight for women still ignore the importance of class and the necessity of national liberation. Claudia Jones criticises the behaviour of suffragettes and white petty-bourgeois women for ignoring the African American struggle in their fight for women's liberation in the 20th Century.

Again from *An End to Neglect* she says: "It was the historic shortcoming of the women's suffrage leaders, predominantly drawn as they were from



• Claudia Jones.

the bourgeoisie and the petty-bourgeoisie, that they failed to link their own struggles to the struggles for the full democratic rights of the Negro people following emancipation."

Progressives in the fight for women's liberation ignored the reality that there is no women's liberation without national liberation.

These same attitudes appear today, albeit under different arguments with different terminologies. Post-modernist ideology, popular among petty-bourgeois revolutionaries and academics in particular, attempts to convince organisers within the movement to view the struggles for women's liberation, working class liberation and Black liberation in competition with each other.

it impossible to name any particular struggle as the principal contradiction that drives the process, which we could leverage to maximise our effectiveness across struggles."

Post-modernism divides while Marxism-Leninism unites. Instead of showing the historical connections that prove there is a basis for unity among all working-class women and focusing on the fact that Black liberation struggles' unity with working class struggles have created progress and real victories for the people's movement in the United States, post-modernism pits the masses against each other.

Discourse is centred around criticising white people as a homogenous whole with the same political and social interests or an assumed shared consciousness. This abstract, eclectic argument refuses to acknowledge that the multinational working class as a whole can be won to support the national liberation movements' struggles, meaning there is a material interest for all working-class women when it comes to fighting against national oppression.

Only the struggle for a socialist society, where the working class has the power and self-interest to abolish oppression against all exploited and oppressed people, can erase the contradictions at the root of the problems Black women in the USA face.

Black women

bring the Black Belt Nation forward

In the 1940s, Black working-class women played a huge role not only in mass organisations, but in labour struggles as well. As both workers and wives of workers, Black women's militancy and struggle helped develop the struggle against poor working conditions, mistreatment, and national oppression on the shop floor.

At the same time, it was still unusual for Black women to be in positions of leadership within unions and mass organisations. Claudia Jones used her writing to combat manifestations of white chauvinism and fight against the tendency seen in the labour movement to dismiss the leadership capabilities of Black working-class women. She stressed that the advanced Black women could pull intermediate elements of the African American masses to engage in the fight against imperialism.

Jones wrote: "The strong capacities, militancy, and organisational talents of Negro women, can... be a powerful lever for bringing forward Negro workers – men and women – as the leading forces of the Negro people's liberation movement... and for rooting the Party among the most exploited and oppressed sections of the working class and its allies."

For a communist party to avoid oppor-

tunist and self-serving positions and remain dedicated to its role as the party of the working class, it's necessary to recruit leaders and allies who have a deep antagonism against the capitalist system that develops the consciousness, determination and drive to end it. Black women often face the greatest humiliation, disrespect and discrimination from

the monopoly capitalist class. This mistreatment and oppression helps to create driven and disciplined revolutionaries.

Greater than a dream

Capitalism crushed the dreams of a young Claudia Jones. That didn't stop Jones from organ-

ising and fighting back against the rotten system she correctly understood as the greatest threat to national liberation domestically and internationally. Even after she was deported from the USA for her organising, she remained a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) until her death in 1964.

The conclusions Jones reaches in her ar-

ticle still apply to the struggle for the multinational working class and the national liberation movement today. Black working-class women's unique issues cannot be understood as isolated, abstract concepts. Revolutionaries must continue to deepen their understanding of the special status of oppression of Black women and all oppressed women.

No matter the consequences, Claudia Jones never stopped fighting for freedom. Her writing and organising continue to pave the road for socialism, the only system that can abolish national exploitation and oppression forever.

It is the responsibility of communists in the USA to erase the illusions of all oppressed people in the belly of the

beast and prepare them for struggle. The struggle for Black liberation and women's liberation is something far greater than a dream: it's a reality, something that can be done and will be done, especially if we listen to the guidance of the revolutionaries that came before us.

Fightback News!
(USA)

International Women's Day Around the world

International Women's Day, officially recognised by the United Nations in 1977, marked its 115th anniversary this year. It is one of the most important global celebrations dedicated to women. Every year on 8th March, people around the world come together to celebrate women's achievements, raise awareness about women's issues, gender equality, and women's rights.

by Ed Newman

Thousands of demonstrators have taken to the streets around the world to mark International Women's Day, taking a stand on a number of issues including the US–Israeli war on Iran and gender-based violence.

In Spain, where the government drew the ire of the USA for refusing to allow it to use Spain's military bases for strikes against Iran, thousands of women took to the streets of major cities to call for an end to the war.

"It is within our power to stop the war, to stop the barbarity, and to win rights," said Yolanda Diaz, Spain's second deputy prime minister. "We proclaim ourselves in defence of peace, in defence of the Iranian people, in defence of Iranian women."

On the first day of the joint US–Israeli war on Iran, strikes on a primary school in the city of Minab killed 165 girls, most between the ages of seven and 12, during class hours – the dead-



Public domain

liest single attack on civilians so far.

In France, where more than 150 demonstrations were held, 73-year-old rape survivor Gisele Pelicot led a march calling for an end to sexual violence, telling a crowd in Paris that "We won't give up".

Ms Pelicot became a global symbol in the fight against sexual violence after she waived her right to anonymity during the 2024 trial of her ex-husband and dozens of strangers who raped her while she was unconscious.

Across the Atlantic, activists gathered at Zorro Ranch in the US town of Albuquerque, New Mexico, where the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein is alleged to have sexually abused and trafficked underage girls and young women.

"The years-long cover-up and protection of Jeffrey Epstein's allies and co-conspirators exposed a culture of impunity that tells survivors their pain is negotiable when powerful men are involved," said Rachel O'Leary Carmona, executive director of Wom-

en's March.

In New York, protesters gathered outside Trump Tower for a 'Believe Survivors' demonstration after this week's publication of FBI documents by the US Justice Department describing interviews with a woman who alleged President Donald Trump sexually assaulted her when she was a minor.

In Puyo, an Amazonian town in Ecuador, members of various Indigenous groups gathered to raise their voices about the degradation of the environment, and oil

and gas expansion. "We want to live in a healthy environment and in harmony with the forest, so we are asking for respect and that public policies for nature are put in place," said Ruth Penafiel, 59, from the Kichwa community in the northern Amazon.

In Brazil, Sunday's marches channelled outrage over the alleged gang rape of a 17-year-old girl in Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana neighbourhood in January. The case gained national attention this week when four suspects handed themselves over to authorities.

In Pakistan's capital, Islamabad, police briefly detained several

women's rights activists attempting to hold a rally in defiance of a government ban on public gatherings imposed amid a surge in militant violence in the country. Aurat March, a network of women's rights activists, condemned the crackdown, saying participants had been peacefully exercising their right to protest.

Women's rights activists shouted slogans during a protest in Istanbul, Turkey. In China and Russia, vendors sold flowers wrapped in pink. And in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, local workers lifted clenched fists and umbrellas as they celebrated.

Radio Havana Cuba



LETTERS

Vladimir Lenin has been called by some historians the Napoleon of the 1917 October Russian Revolution. Other so-called 'historians' have said that Lenin began as a Camille Desmoulins, continued as a Robespierre and ended up as a Napoleon.

All this far from subtle bourgeois character 'analysis' of Lenin is, of course, fictional nonsense. Lenin was, in actual fact, a communist, nothing more, nothing less.

To this and his utter lack of personal ambition was his success largely due. He combined the qualities of a scholar and a great intellect with his truly outstanding organising abilities. He never doubted himself as he never doubted the eventual fulfilment of his socialist and communist plans for the Soviet Union. His genius was revealed as much by the way in which, biding his time, he carefully fomented the growing revolutionary spirit in Russia, as by the lightning strike in which he hurled Alexander F Kerensky from power in October 1917.

Lenin was undoubtedly a very popular Soviet leader – mainly by virtue of his principled intellect. He had the power of explaining profound ideas in simple terms. And he also combined this with shrewdness and the greatest intellectual audacity. Early in 1918 he made peace with Germany, accepting the harsh terms of Brest-Litovsk. He also

faced fierce opposition both in Russia and from the imperialist world. But once he had crushed the counter-revolution he became the builder, revealing energy and strength of purpose in re-establishing the Soviet Union with the principles of socialism and communism.

Prior to 1917 Lenin was known mainly in Europe (Munich, London and Geneva etc). Soon after the seismic events of 1917 however, his personality and status penetrated the most remote corners of the world. This fact must remain as one of the wonders of history. Leninism is therefore not merely a Russian phenomenon, but also an international one. For instance, Lenin's works such as *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism; The State and Revolution; The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky* and "*Left Wing*" *Communism – An Infantile Disorder* do not apply only to Russia, but to all imperialist countries as well. Leninism is the Marxism of the new epoch of the transition from capitalism to socialism and communism.

Marxism owes its vitality to what Lenin has introduced into it. In order to get a grasp of the full nature of capitalism however, a serious study of the works of Marx, Engels, Stalin and Lenin is indispensable.

A McKerl Fife

In the early 1970s I worked at a powder metallurgy research plant in Bedford for a month.

Powder metallurgy is another way of making a shape that is a product in metal. Other ways are machining from solid, casting and forging.

The most famous use of powder metallurgy is 'Oilite' (self-lubricating) bearings. The technology could be of interest to the

DPR Korea and involves making molten metals (various), atomising them into a powder, pressing them into a shape, and sintering them into the coalesced final item. The DPRK is an advanced industrial society and powder metallurgy is at the forefront of materials science.

Roger Newby Sheffield

Before 1975 Icelandic women who worked outside the home earned less than 60 per cent of what men earned.

The United Nations had declared that 1975 was to be International Women's Year. Representatives from an innovative women's group, 'Red Stockings', put forward the idea of a strike to protest at wage discrepancies and unfair employment practices. It was to be called the "Women's Day Off".

Sure enough, on 24th October 1974 some 90 per cent of Icelandic women refused to do paid jobs, do any housework or any child rearing for the day. The idea was to demonstrate "the indispensable worth of women's work for Iceland's economy and society".

On the day in question, 25,000 people – over 10 per cent of the population – demonstrated in the capital Reykjavik. The following year, 1975, the Icelandic Parliament passed a law guaranteeing equal pay. The events of that day are also captured in a film directed by Pamela Hogan called *The Day Iceland Stood Still*.

Today, according to the World Economic Forum, Iceland is the only country that has closed the gender pay gap such that women get 90 per cent of what men earn. And today in Iceland every national leadership position – President, Prime Minister, bishop and police chief – is filled by a

woman.

This month is Women's History Month. The achievements of Icelandic women should not be forgotten.

Alan Stewart Wakefield

As the Middle East burns President Donald Trump chooses the moment to ignore the horrors and instead boasts about how he had chosen the golden drapes for the world's biggest, best, most magnificent and expensive ballroom being constructed in the White House. 'Playing the fiddle while Rome burns' comes to mind as the President speaks proudly about the \$400 million monstrosity while thousands die in his illegal and brutal war. A peaceful country such as Iran was no threat to anyone.

The US leader is, of course, only the figurehead for American imperialism. A rotten, corrupt and degenerate system that now, as predicted by Karl Marx, is in terminal decline. He serves the Military Industrial Complex and the sinister lobby groups that run and control everything in the USA and the Western capitalist world. Things could be so very different. And they are in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, The Chinese People's Republic and the other socialist countries which follow a very different road in spite of imperialist threats. In the case of Cuba, a blockade aimed at starving that country into submission.

The USA pushes for never-ending wars and risks a possible nuclear Third World War. Meanwhile, in Beijing the Chinese President, Xi Jinping, addresses the annual Two Sessions meeting that focuses on the country's economic priorities and

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

UNTIL 26 MARCH

Imperial War Museum: Emergency Exits: The Fight for Independence in Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus. IWM, Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, London SE1 6HZ.

UNTIL SUN 29 MAR

Screen Cuba: Films to Change the World. Showings of Cuban films at London, Oxford, Pontypridd, Nottingham, Manchester and Leeds. Details and bookings at <https://screencuba.uk>

UNTIL 14 APRIL

Marx Memorial Library: Introducing Marxist Classics. 19:00. Online fortnightly Tuesday classes. Register on MML website.

UNTIL 18 APR

Townsend Theatre Productions: One-person Magic Lantern show of *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* adapted by Neil Gore. Touring show at venues up and down England. See TTP website for details and tickets.

TUES 17 MAR

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Lobby of Parliament to Defend the Right to Protest. 14:00. SW London. Reister on PSC website.

TUES 17 MAR

Socialist History Society: Book launch: John Rees's *The Fiery Spirits: Popular Protest, Parliament and the English Revolution*. 19:00. Online. Register via SHS website.

SAT 21 MAR

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Don't Buy Apartheid – Day of Action. Nationwide protests at supermarkets etc.

WED 25 MAR

Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Arms Factory Protests Day of Action: Bristol, London, Newcastle, Shenstone and Towcester. Details of locations and times on PSC website.

THURS 26 MAR

General Federation of Trade Unions Educational Trust: The General Strike in its Aftermath. 19:00. Online talk. Book on GFTUET website.

SAT 28 MAR

Marx Memorial Library: Second-hand book sale. 11:00–15:00. MML, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU.

SAT 28 MAR

Together Alliance: Anti-far right demonstration. Assemble 12:00. Park Lane, London for rally at Trafalgar Square. London. Details TBA.

SAT 28 MAR

Scottish Cuba Solidarity Campaign: End the US Blockade against Cuba. Vigil. 13:00–13:45. Argyle Street, Glasgow, G2 8AA (front of M&S) and fourth Saturday of every month.

SUN 29 MAR

Solaris (1972 Soviet sci-fi film). 11:30. The Prince Charles Cinema, 7 Leicester Pl, London, WC2H 7BY.

WED 1–MON 6 APR

Lakenheath Action for Peace: Peace camp. Details TBA.

SAT 11 APR

Morning Star: 1926–2026 Organised Labour 100 Years From the General Strike. 09:30–17:30. Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9BD.

SUN 12 APR

East End Walks: From Yiddish to Bangla: Street Life and Culture from Whitechapel to Brick Lane 1880s–1980s. 10:30–13:00. Book at <https://www.eastendwalks.com>

THURS 16 APR

Cuba Solidarity Campaign: Merseyside Cuba Solidarity fundraiser: 19:00. The Casa, 29 Hope St, Liverpool, L1 9BP.

FRI 17 APR

TUC Midlands: Mary Macarthur Lecture. 19:00–22:00. Workers' Institute, Black Country Living Museum, Tipton Road, Dudley DY1 4SQ. Details TBA.

TUE 28 APR

Workers Memorial Day. Nationwide events.

THURS 30 APR

General Federation of Trade Unions Educational Trust: Day Nurseries & 'British Restaurants': Women Workers in WW2. 19:00. Online talk. Book on GFTUET website.

FRI 1–MON 4 MAY

May Day events nationwide.

SAT 2 MAY

Stand Up To Racism: Unite the People Against Racism and the Far Right. Demo, rally and festival. Chamberlain Square, Birmingham B3.

The editor welcomes letters from our readers.

If you have a contribution to make please make sure it reaches us before Wednesday.

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

...continued from page 8

policy agendas for the next five-year plan. Important issues include high quality economic growth, technical innovation including AI, and China's role in the world. It considers the possible impact of global tensions and US inspired trade wars along with a discussion on boosting domestic demand and dealing with problems such as have occurred in the housing market. There were no threats, no unreasonable demands on other nations, no geo-political ambitions and no talk of war.

The harmonious development of Chinese society along with the state's economic might and increasing ability to defend itself ensures a more peaceful international situation along with boosting international trade and co-operation. A win-win outlook and a beacon of hope for all the oppressed people in the world today. What a dramatic contrast to the American obsession for world hegemony.

Nearly 3,000 deputies were assembled for the Two Sessions meetings. Their concerns extended beyond simply GDP targets to include youth development and elderly care with planning for an increased life expectancy. They will also discuss the concerns of local communities and how national policy changes may impact people's lives. The debates will go deeper than whether it will work to include a democratic analysis of the development and control of objectives. This is real democracy in action. In an obvious reference to the actions of the USA, Xi Jinping, in his address to the meeting, said: "We must uphold the golden rule of non-interference and jointly oppose acts of imposing ones will on others, stoking bloc confrontation, creating small circles and forcing others to pick sides."

The ability of China to resist trade wars, tariffs and

sanctions has been aided by the pragmatic and friendly policies of the Russian Federation. By joining together, the two great nations have combined their resources to deter American aggression. Interestingly, the DPRK has made its own contribution to opposing the US proxy war in Ukraine by sending its forces to assist in defeating the recent Kursk offensive.

The dramatic contrast between the actions and policies of the USA and People's China has never been greater. When the war against Iran is over a very different world order may develop. More nations will start to realise that American actions are based upon control and exploitation, they cannot be trusted and will do nothing to protect them in a crisis. It is to China, and the other socialist countries, due to their steady progress, integrity and opposition to the colonial policies of the USA, that countries will increasingly turn. Those socialist countries with their inherent stability, steady economic development and genuine desire for friendship and co-operation are all eager to do business in an honest and straight-forward manner.

The countries of the Middle East who up to now have aligned themselves closely to the USA now have an opportunity to break free. And how much longer will the European states be prepared to act as servile vassals by bowing, scraping and meekly accepting every demand and humiliation from their masters in Washington?

The world must change if we are to survive. It must say no to hegemony, no to destruction of the environment and no to bullies who care nothing about human life. Workers of the world unite! Get involved in the class struggle today!

John Maryon
Suffolk

Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

A week is maybe a long time in politics as Harold Wilson once said, but five years and one month is a short time for a political party's lifespan. Such is the unhappy fate of the Alba Party, which was founded in February 2021 and whose death was announced last Sunday, due to a lack of money caused by fraud, according to leader Kenny MacAskill.

The formal notice of death came after the leadership met with the Electoral Commission who said Alba must voluntarily de-register or face statutory de-registration. When news of its financial difficulties emerged last month an Alba Continuation Group emerged and speedily raised about £28,000, but this was peanuts compared with what is needed simply to cover debts that amount to £200,000. As this august four-strong group included individuals of such proven integrity as Tommy Sheridan and former MP Angus B McNeil, success was unlikely.

Of the group and its money, MacAskill said "not one penny has been received by Alba HQ from them, despite our dire financial plight". He also accused them of being a self-appointed group who sought to take over the party without consulting

the membership and not providing the indemnity for debts they publicly promised. Members have been asked to continue paying their monthly subs to allow for an orderly winding-up and to pay staff.

Alba was always something of a fan club devoted to founder Alex Salmond. Its members, who at one point numbered about 8,000, were former SNP members united only in bitter opposition to the leadership of Nicola Sturgeon for assorted reasons. Some were furious at Sturgeon's investigations into Salmond, others deplored her controversial views on gender and the alliance with the Greens. Many more were angry at Madame Sturgeon for failing to advance the cause of independence despite sweeping the board in the 2015 General Election and being in government ever since. But beyond independence they were a very mixed bag. Alba was launched on the base of polling suggesting that 40 per cent of those who voted SNP would support a Salmond-led party. Things did not work out that way.

It claimed to support women's rights but lost a women's officer who complained about rude comments about women by NEC members. It took up the old SNP slogan of "It's Scotland's Oil" when the SNP dropped it in favour of wind turbines. Not that it matters very much, but on the whole the party had left-wing economic policies allied to a degree of social conservatism. In September 2022 the Rt Hon Alex Salmond rushed to London to attend the Accession Council held at St James's Palace, but he later wanted an elected head of State for Scotland, doubtless himself.

Their electoral record was abysmal. At the 2021 Holyrood elections Alba stood in the regional lists only in order not to split the nationalist vote. It secured only 44,000 or 1.66 per

cent of the vote. The 2022 local elections were worse. None of its 111 candidates were elected, including the 13 sitting councillors who defected from the SNP. =

Its two MPs, elected in 2019 on the SNP ticket, lost heavily in the 2024 contest when it stood in 19 constituencies collecting 11,784 votes and 19 lost deposits, with the best result being 2.8 per cent.

Their sole Holyrood representative defected after being defeated in the 2023 SNP leadership contest and resigned from Alba after losing in the leadership contest caused by Alex Salmond's death. Those who said the party's name meant "All Losers Back Alex" seem to have a point.

Who is to blame will doubtless be fought over for a long time, and as the boys and girls in blue have been called in by the party the lawyers will be looking forward to the court case. MacAskill firmly blames former General Secretary Chris McEleny who in turn claims all was well during his tenure. As McEleny was a Ministry of Defence employee, those who think MI5 is behind every setback will have a field day.

Needless to say, many members deplore the NEC's decision. One told *The Herald* that: "Alba members put their faith in Kenny to carry on Alex

Salmond's dream, instead they got a quitter and a loser who has killed their party." McNeil was particularly scathing spitting out that "it was a sad and unnecessary way to end Alex Salmond's dream – but someone decided it was their ball and they were going home...there was great determination to finish the party".

This is not the first time a rival to the SNP has vanished. Between 2005–2011 there was the Scottish Jacobite Party, which was launched at Glenfinnan in 2005 at the time of the 260th anniversary of Charles Edward Stewart raising his standard in 1745.

Oblivious to the fact that the Young Pretender wanted to take over the *British* throne, they wanted an independent Scotland with a walled border from around Blackpool to Hull to keep out desperate English immigrants.

Two of its three members contested the Holyrood elections in 2007 and the 2010 Westminster election, on which occasion they won 290 votes. They make Alba look like a great triumph.

No doubt the even more fringe 'Independence for Scotland Party', which secured 678 votes in two seats in 2024, will be looking towards a great renaissance with ex-Alba members flooding to join...

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China at the London Book Fair

by Zheng Bofei
& Zhao Jiasong

At Olympia where the 2026 London Book Fair opened on Tuesday, the China pavilion stands out not merely for its expansive footprint but for the comprehensive publishing ecosystem it showcases.

The Chinese publishing delegation has arrived with an impressive portfolio of over 4,000 titles and a packed schedule of more than 40 events. Spanning the three-day fair, the agenda ranges from high-profile new book launches and author talks to rights exchanges and industry forums.

From the historic *Yongle Encyclopedia* to modern award-winners, the China pavilion offers a comprehensive view of Chinese literature. Complementing these physical texts are interactive VR experiences and IP exhibits, highlighting the sector's dynamic fusion of heritage,



• At the China Pavilion.

digital technology and creative content development.

This approach is also reflected in the fair's programme. A symposium on *China and the World in the New Era* launched multilingual editions, and events surrounding the English editions of *China Development Report 2025* and *Global Development Report 2025* brought Chinese development issues into a broader international

publishing conversation.

For Marcelino Elosua, founder and chair of LID Publishing, this initiative transcends mere market dynamics. Speaking at the symposium, he said publishing is not only a business activity, but also something with a deeper cultural meaning.

Others pointed to a broader change in the industry itself. Peter Reay, a publishing professional

and translator with over a decade of experience living in China, observed that the dynamic between China and overseas markets is evolving into a truly reciprocal exchange.

"In the publishing industry, I think we are definitely talking about the change, the switch of that balance from having a one-way stream to now having a bilateral stream between the two," he said.

Nicolas Cheetham, managing director at Head of Zeus, made a similar point after a showcase event for Chinese writer Mai Jia's translated works. The China pavilion, he said, offered readers, editors, translators and publishers "somewhere to gather, somewhere to meet and to swap our stories and our recommendations and our enthusiasm. That's what the book trade is built on. It's built on individual passions and enthusiasms."

That network now extends beyond publishing in the narrow sense. An industry event held during the fair focused on China-Britain co-operation in creative publishing, with topics ranging from youth IP development to digital content innovation and international distribution.

As Jiella Esmat, CEO of 8 Lions Entertainment Ltd, put it: "Ultimately, collaboration brings faster, better, greater results."

Artificial Intelligence was another recurring

theme at the fair, particularly in relation to translation and content creation. "People aren't reading books because they were done efficiently or conveniently," but "are reading books for the human connection" says Jack Hargreaves, a young British translator of Chinese literature. But he warned that surrendering too much of the creative process to machine translation would mean losing "a really important and foundational aspect of writing and translation and literature".

Chinese writer Xu Zhuyuan placed AI in a wider historical context, saying that every information revolution changes how people understand themselves and the world, while also bringing anxiety and dislocation. "A great reader wants to take themselves away from the real world and immerse themselves in someone else's virtual reality" he said.

Xinhua

The Chosen Men return!

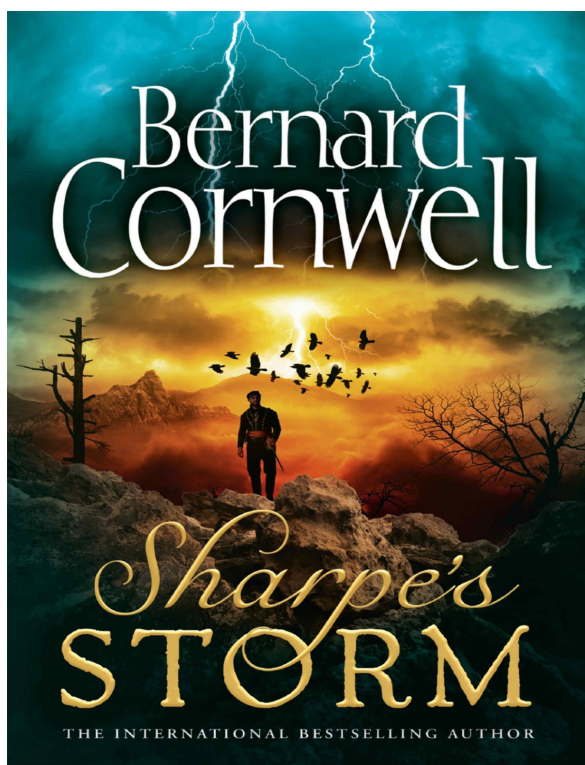
by Ben Soton

Sharpe's Storm by Bernard Cornwell. Harper-Collins. Hbk: 2025, 368pp, rrp £22.00. Sbk: 2026, 368pp, rrp £9.99. Audio: 628 minutes, rrp £17.99.

This is Bernard Cornwell's latest novel in the Sharpe series – set in 1813, as the British army along with their Spanish and Portuguese allies advance into France during the Napoleonic wars. Most of the Sharpe novels are set during the war with France when Britain was aligned with the absolute monarchies of Prussia, Russia and Austria. So I wouldn't imagine the Sharpe saga, with its glorification of

war, especially a conflict where this country was arguably on the wrong side, to be especially popular on the left.

What of the character Sharpe? Richard Sharpe was born around 1780 in poverty, becomes involved in crime. In the television series, Sharpe, played by Sean Bean, is a Yorkshireman; in the original novels he is a Londoner. He eventually joins the army and begins a successful military career. So successful that he is given a commission by Arthur Wellesley, the first Duke of Wellington. This gives him both strength and vulnerability. On the one hand he is Wellington's man, giving him a degree of protection. But he lacks the wealthy connections of most other



officers and therefore Wellington can as easily break him as he could make him. For this reason Sharpe

is often given dangerous missions; in the case of *Sharpe's Storm* Admiral Sir Joel Chase has been tasked by Wellington to overview the river Ardour, check its bridges and examine the possibility of getting warships down it. This is made increasingly difficult as the events take place during a storm. Although Sharpe is admired by the military top brass, he still manages to make enemies amongst the ranks of the gentry. In this story Sir Nathaniel Peacock, a man who obviously bought his commission and with limited experience, is a liability. Peacock continually reminds Sharpe of his social superiority, which Sharpe is able to brush off with a degree of humour and sarcasm.

The idea of Sharpe is based on the notion that the ruling class, which may contain a few bad apples (anyone who has watched the news recently knows that it is more than just a few), is fundamentally good, recognises talent and is willing to occasionally bring in new blood. This positive view of the ruling class explains why the series is popular on the right. Sharpe, although a fundamentally decent individual, has absolutely no concept of class loyalty. Meanwhile the character also has deep insecurities, which emanate from the knowledge that he may never be fully accepted. Thus accepting the limitations of meritocracy. Sharpe is ultimately a mercenary for his own ruling class.

Iran Has Served the USA an Eviction Notice?

by Pepe Escobar

The new Supreme Leader of Iran, Mojtaba Khamenei, chosen by the Assembly of Experts, so far has not spoken a single word in public. The Islamic Republican Guard Corps (IRGC) is speaking for him. From the start, Mojtaba was the preferred candidate to succeed Ayatollah Khamenei, the man who planned in meticulous detail how to break the Empire's back. The IRGC is now showing to the whole planet, especially the Global South, what was lying behind the restraint advised by Khamenei for years.

In a matter of days, the IRGC blinded US radars across the Middle East; weaponised the Strait of Hormuz, sending the global economy into a tailspin and sent Washington what for all practical purposes amounts to Iran's terms for ending the conflict. Here are some of the most prominent conditions for a possible ceasefire – assuming Tehran will ever trust the USA to comply:

- Removal of all sanctions against Iran and release of all of Iran's frozen assets.
- Recognition of Iran's right to enrich uranium on its own soil.
- Full compensation for the damage caused by the war.
- Extradition of Iranian fifth columnists abroad and end of orchestrated media campaigns against Tehran.
- No attacks on Hezbollah in Lebanon or Ansarallah in Yemen.
- The dismantling of all US military bases in the Middle East.



Let that slowly sink in. Here we have Iran telling the self-described 'most powerful military in the history of the world' to essentially surrender.

Now compound it with IRGC Aerospace Force Commander Madjid Mousavi announcing that "after neutralising US air defence layers in the region, Iran is transitioning to a new missile doctrine. From now on, no missiles carrying warheads lighter than one ton will be used. Waves of missile attacks will be more frequent and more widespread." That is already happening as the IRGC launches more Kheibar Shekan ballistic missiles on Tel Aviv and the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

This operation is called *Labbayk ya Khamenei* (At Your Service, O Khamenei). Read it as the first Iranian operation explicitly dedicated to the new Supreme Leader.

The Kheibar Shekan – range of 1,450 km – is road-mobile, ready to be launched from a truck

in less than 30 minutes, flies under satellite-aided guidance with a manoeuvrable re-entry vehicle that executes terminal zig-zag evasion at speeds the IRGC claims reach as much as Mach 10. And yes: from now on it carries one-ton warheads. That doubles the blast radius and the destructive power of each missile, as much as it doubles, or triples, or quadruples the US-Israeli Hellfire interceptor.

A Patriot PAC-3 interceptor costs \$4 million. A THAAD interceptor costs \$12.7 million. An Arrow-3 costs \$3.5 million. They have all been methodically destroyed by the IRGC.

In practice, from now the 'Epstein Syndicate' needs to use more interceptors – that they don't have – per each incoming missile to perhaps achieve the same probability of success.

And then there are the Khorramshahr-4 missiles: liquid-fuelled, 2,000 to 3,000-kilometre range, carrying even heavier

1,500 to 1,800-kilogram warheads, with thrust-er-powered manoeuvrable re-entry vehicles.

We are talking about the heaviest conventional warheads in Iran's arsenal, launched side by side with the upgraded Kheibar Shekans. All in name of *Labbayk ya Khamenei*. The symbology speaks volumes.

These are the latest undeniable facts on the battlefield. Assuming somebody in Washington with an IQ over room temperature bothered to explain them to the White House, it's no wonder Trump is now bragging that the war is "very complete". Incidentally, that happened *after* his hour-long phone call to Vladimir Putin, requested by the White House.

Moscow's read-out, delivered by the unflappable presidential adviser Yuri Ushakov, contains this jade pearl: "The Russian president expressed a number of ideas aimed at achieving a prompt political and diplomatic resolution of the Iranian

conflict, including taking into account the contacts he has held with the leaders of the Gulf states, with the president of Iran, and with leaders of several other countries."

That's diplo-talk for Putin telling the Americans some hard facts of life and volunteering to find that oh so elusive off-ramp. Assuming Tehran wants to play ball.

According to cease-less Washington spin, the proverbial Beltway sycophants are urging Trump to "formulate a plan for the US withdrawal from the war", announcing that "the military has largely achieved its goals" (even though they haven't).

The fact is that the White House have already asked Turkey, Qatar and Oman to relay American ceasefire proposals to Tehran. The Iranians say negotiations with the USA are no longer on the agenda.

The Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, Mohammad Ghalibaf, said: "We are absolutely NOT seeking a ceasefire. We

believe the aggressor must be struck in the mouth so that it learns a lesson and never again even thinks of attacking dear Iran."

Which brings us once again to why Trump, endlessly bragging about "we're winning", would call President Putin as the war rages, and only a few hours after Putin adamantly proclaimed his "unwavering support" for Iran and the new Rahbar (Leader), Mojtaba Khamenei.

The answer, inevitably, is that Trump is looking for a way out. The absolute majority of the planet, as well as quite a few players across vassal lands, are already blaming the Americans for the collapse of the global economy.

That's because the whole continuity of government, set in motion by the slain Ayatollah Khamenei, is supremely confident that they can bring down the Epstein Syndicate to its drenched-in-blood knees.

Ayatollah Khamenei pulled off what may go down in history as the greatest upset in 21st Century geopolitics. All merit to his clarity of vision, endurance, self-sacrifice and the mind-boggling meticulous planning of the mosaic defence strategy, now in effect.

What Iran under Mojtaba Khamenei – and that's a national consensus – wants now is an unmistakable victory. The Empire of Chaos, Plunder and Permanent Strikes, with its "If I don't like you, I kill you" ethos, must be thoroughly humiliated.

Anti-fascists meet in Brazil

by Ed Newman

The organisation of the First International Anti-Fascist Conference for the Sovereignty of Peoples is gaining momentum in Brazil through preparatory meetings to build political and intellectual networks against the extreme right.

The event, scheduled for 26–29 March in the city of Porto Alegre, is part of a broader effort to create a space for co-ordination among social movements, progressive parties, unions and groups concerned about the resurgence of authoritarian currents throughout the world.

The meeting is expected to bring together more than 250 intellectuals, political leaders and representatives of social movements to discuss the characteristics of con-

temporary fascism and develop common strategies for responding.

Israel Dutra, from the national leadership of the Brazilian Socialism and Liberty Party, stated that the current preparation process reflects the growing reach of the event, with preliminary meetings taking place in various locations across the South American giant.

In this regard, he mentioned the recent meeting in São Paulo and announced similar events in Ribeirão Preto, Fortaleza, Natal, Florianópolis, and the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, the province whose capital is Porto Alegre.

According to Dutra, the proliferation of these pre-conferences demonstrates the interest of political and social movements in broadening the debate on the threats posed by author-



itarianism and neo-fascism on the global stage.

These gatherings serve as spaces for political training, the exchange of experiences and the organisation of delegations that will participate in the

international event.

In this way, activists, academics, union members and members of popular movements converge to strengthen co-operation among movements from different countries.

Among the groups participating in the preliminary meetings were peasant organisations, anti-racist collectives, feminist groups, unions and citizen platforms that promote the defence of social and civil rights.

The fight against racism, feminism and demands related to the world of work – issues considered fundamental pillars of democratic resistance – were also recurring themes in the discussions.

For the conference organisers, building an international anti-fascist network is crucial in a context marked by the rise of hate speech and geopolitical conflicts that, in their view, fuel the advance of ultra-conservative forces.

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Truth: the first casualty of war

by Petr Ermilin

Judging by the grim expressions of Donald Trump and members of his inner circle, the operation against Iran is not going as well as the American leadership had originally expected. The number of casualties among US servicemen also appears to be significantly higher than the seven or eight deaths cited by official sources.

Tehran claims that hundreds of American soldiers have already been killed, though such figures should also be treated with caution. The first casualty of war is always the truth. Any side involved in a conflict tends to minimise its own losses while exaggerating those of the enemy.

In addition, wartime secrecy, censorship and other elements of information warfare make it difficult to obtain reliable data.

One indicator that may deserve attention however, is the appearance of new job announcements linked to the US military. On the website of Joint Technology Solution, a company which performs various contractor assignments for the Pentagon, an unusual vacancy recently appeared – a specialist responsible for handling the personal belongings of servicemen.

The position involves receiving, sorting and processing the personal effects of deceased American soldiers. The duties listed for the role include:

- receiving, storing, processing, and ship-

ping personal belongings;

- record-keeping and inventory management;
- cleaning and laundering items when necessary;
- photographing belongings for documentation and identification;
- sending the personal property of deceased and severely wounded servicemen to their families and next of kin.

The key requirement for the job is the ability to remain calm in emotionally difficult situations. The pay offered for this work is about \$15 per hour.

It is hardly an enviable job. Whether that wage is high or low for the USA de-

pends largely on the region. In California, for example, the legally mandated minimum hourly wage is slightly higher – around \$16.

Other regions still have minimum wages closer to \$10 per hour. In this case however, the hiring is being conducted in the state of Delaware, where the minimum wage is precisely \$15 per hour. In other words, the Pentagon appears to have opted for the most economical option even when it comes to handling the personal effects of its fallen soldiers.

The workplace listed for the position is the well-known Dover Air Force Base. The base was opened in 1941 and in 1955 it became home to the Armed Forces Medical Examiner System Mortuary Affairs

Center, effectively the primary military morgue of the USA.

Since then, about 90 per cent of all US military personnel killed in action – beginning with the Vietnam War – have passed through this facility.

This is what gives the Dover base its sombre reputation. Additional staff are usually recruited only during major military operations when casualties increase significantly.

Moreover, the Pentagon may be understating the nature of the work by describing it solely as handling personal belongings. In reality, employees in such roles often have to deal with the bodies and remains of fallen servicemen.

It is difficult to imag-

ine performing such work without severe psychological strain – especially for a wage of \$15 per hour.

While the Pentagon searches for additional personnel for its mortuary services, Karoline Leavitt, press secretary to Donald Trump, has avoided giving clear answers when journalists ask about the real number of American military casualties.

Observers note that during such briefings she often sidesteps the question – a sign, critics say, that the official figures may not reflect the full scale of the losses. For now, the gap between official statements and speculation surrounding the conflict continues to grow.

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