

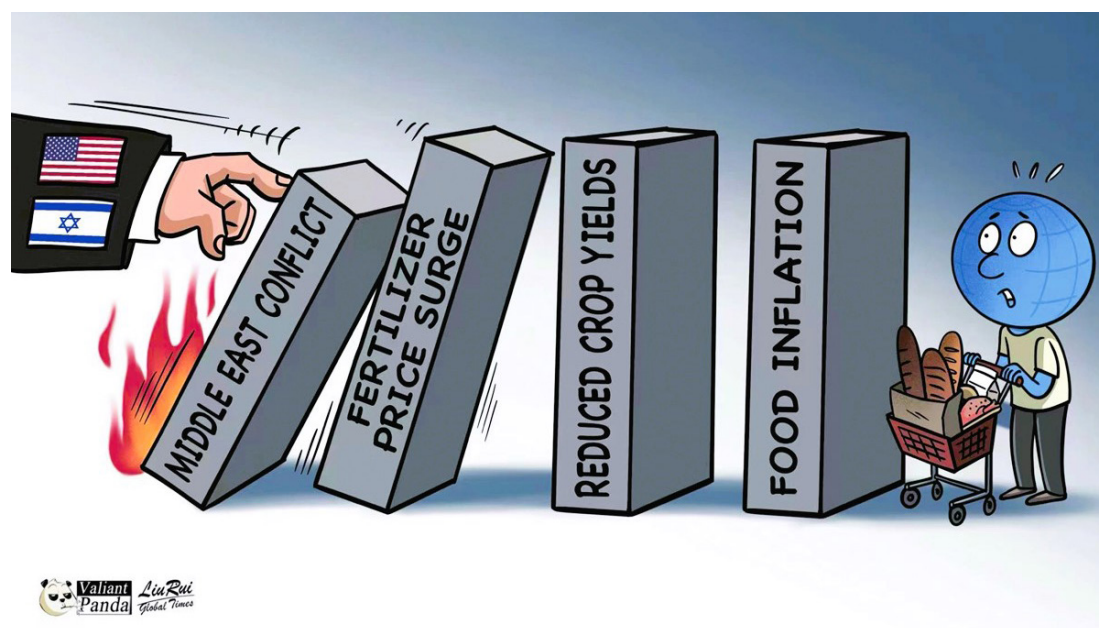
Tension rises as peace talks stall

by our Arab Affairs correspondent

An uneasy lull over the Persian Gulf as the Americans prolong their ceasefire with Iran indefinitely to allegedly give the Iranians more time to prepare for another round of peace talks in Pakistan. But the scheduled second round of top-level negotiations, which was to have been held in Islamabad this week, has been postponed and the double blockade continues with a tit-for-tat struggle between Iranian patrol boats and American warships for control of the Persian Gulf.

Central to reopening the narrow sea route is the halt of the Zionist aggression on Lebanon and the end of the American naval blockade around the Hormuz Strait. But while the Americans continue to turn a blind eye to Chinese and Russian vessels they've stepped up their provocations against the Islamic Republic. This week American warships seized an Iranian oil tanker bound for the Indian ocean and Iranian patrol boats boarded two Western container vessels who were in breach of their own blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

The right to impose a toll on the Strait, which has hitherto



Valiant Panda Liu Rui Global Times

been regarded as an international waterway open to all, has become a key Iranian war-aim in the current conflict. They've said that in any future settlement they're prepared to share fees with Oman on the other side of the Strait. In the meantime they've started to collect their first revenue from tolls imposed on ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz, which is responsible for 20 per cent of global oil and liquid natural gas shipments.

The Israelis endlessly claim that the "only democracy in the Middle East" is also the protector of the Christian Arab communities in the region. Only last year their leader, Benjamin Netanyahu, told the United Nations that Israel is the only place in the Middle East where Christians feel safe. Palestinian church bodies thought otherwise. The Higher Presidential Committee for Church Affairs described Netanyahu's comments as "lies aimed at whitewashing the occupation and distorting

the truth".

The committee asserted that Israeli settlements and military policies are what destroyed the historic Christian presence in Palestine – through the confiscation of church lands, closure of roads leading to places of worship, restrictions on freedom of movement, and even direct attacks on churches in Jerusalem and Gaza during military operations.

This year, Israeli authorities blocked Jerusalem's Catholic cardinal from observing Palm Sunday at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre prompting

international outcry. Christian opinion was further outraged when an Israeli soldier smashed the head off a statue of Jesus in a Catholic village in southern Lebanon.

This was too much even for

the bible-punching Christian-Zionists of America to swallow. Ayman Odeh, the leader of the communist-led Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) in the Israeli parliament sardonically said: "We'll wait to hear the police spokesperson claim that 'the soldier felt threatened by Jesus'."

Ahmad Tibi, another Hadash bloc MP, added that those who blow up mosques and churches in Gaza and spit on Christian clergy in occupied East Jerusalem without punishment are not afraid to destroy a statue of Jesus. "Perhaps these racists have also learned from Donald Trump to insult Jesus Christ and insult Pope Leo?" he asked, referring to Trump's now-deleted AI-generated image that portrayed him as a Jesus-like figure and his feud with the head of the Roman Catholic Church, who has criticised the war on Iran.

INSIDE	
THE FAST TRACK ..	P5
SAMUEL BECKETT ..	P6
VIJAY SINGH ..	P10
CHINA ..	PP11,12
CUBA ..	P12

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THE NEW WORKER

Weekly paper of the New Communist Party

Starmer must go!

Starmer may not be in the Trump league but nobody believes a word he says these days. He says he knew nothing about Peter Mandelson's security status. He claims the Foreign Office didn't tell him that the grandee had failed the vetting process. Starmer clearly thinks everybody is as stupid as himself.

Many thought that Ramsay MacDonald and Tony Blair were the worst but Starmer has proved them wrong. MacDonald presided over the meteoric rise of Labour after the First World War and led the first Labour government in history back in 1924. He ended up splitting the movement and serving the ruling class he once claimed to oppose during the turmoil that followed the Wall Street crash of 1929, which plunged the world into a slump that only ended with the outbreak of the Second World War. MacDonald admitted that all he could do was administer capitalism. But he still talked about "socialism" – albeit in the never-never land of the far distant future.

Blair, on the other hand, never talked about socialism at all and what he achieved is far outweighed by his role in the imperialist onslaught against Iraq and his support for Zionism that continues to this day. Nevertheless, he did preside over the negotiations that ended the conflict in northern Ireland and his administration and that of the Gordon Brown government that followed did pass some constitutional reforms and make some minor concessions to the union movement.

Starmer, on the other hand, has achieved nothing. All Starmer can brag about is a purge of the Corbynistas that drove hundreds of thousands out of the Labour Party.

Starmer surrounds himself with people lesser than himself – such as the ageing Blairites who pandered to his vanity to return to the money tree of Westminster politics. They said Starmer's stand – just another variant of Tory austerity – was the key to Labour's loveless victory in the 2024 general election. But in reality Labour's landslide was due to the Faragist intervention that gravely split the Tory vote across the entire country. Now with the Greens and Faragists snapping at their heels Labour is heading for disaster at the Scottish, Welsh and regional polls in May.

Angela Rayner and Andy Burnham wait in the wings to pick up the pieces when Starmer inevitably falls on his sword. Their time will come but at the end of the day their outlook differs little from the right-wing Labour milieu they came from in the first place. They talk about workers' rights and pay lip-service to union bureaucrats. That's as far as it goes – and as far as it will ever go as long as the careerists and time-servers remain in charge.

Dumping Starmer won't make much of a difference. But any Labour recovery can only begin when he goes – together with the Blairites and the other bureaucrats who surround him. That fight begins amongst the rank-and-file of the labour movement. That's where the struggle for socialism must begin anew. It starts now...

The end of the 'special relationship'

by Zhang Wanshi

Sir Keir Starmer says he won't give in to pressure from the US President on the Iran war; a remark that reflects a deepening trust deficit in the Atlantic alliance. Donald Trump has repeatedly criticised Starmer for refusing to join the USA-Israel war against Iran, while Starmer once again expresses opposition, saying in his latest response that he is "not going to yield" to pressure following Trump's warning over an Anglo-American trade deal. The move by the USA, which seeks to tightly link economic relations with geopolitical alignment, has deepened the rift across the transatlantic alliance as the UK refused to bear the costs of Washington's strategic gamble.

Starmer told the Commons that "I'm not going to change my mind, I'm not going to yield, it is not in our national interest to join this war and we will not do so". The remarks came after President Trump told Sky News that when the USA asked the UK for help "they were not there". Pressed further on the relationship, Trump said it had "been better, but it's sad".

The American president also told Sky News that the economic deal struck with the UK, which cut some of his tariffs on cars, aluminium and steel, was "better than I had to" and that it could "always be changed".

The American use of trade deals as leverage, seeking to tightly link economic relations with geopolitical alignment, has not only failed to bring the UK in line but has also deepened the trust deficit across the transatlantic alliance says Wang Hanyi, a research fellow at the China-UK Centre for Cultural Exchange at the Shanghai International Studies University.

A recent analysis by CNN stated that relations between Trump and Starmer have taken "another turn for the worse" and the BBC also noted that the relationship between the two countries' leaders has in recent weeks shown signs of strain over the Middle East.

A report in the *Guardian* said that Starmer has increasingly leaned towards the EU, arguing that the economic and security benefits of a closer relationship with the bloc are "simply too big to ignore".

Still, the prime minister's

spokesperson said the UK continues to have "a close relationship" with the USA despite the US President's latest comments. "The special relationship with the US exists on multiple levels, and we have a close relationship with the USA, which spans trade, diplomacy, national security, culture, and beyond. It's far bigger than any individual issue," the spokesperson added.

The UK's position is grounded in a pragmatic assessment of national interest, Wang said. The Starmer government views the conflict not as a collective defence operation under NATO, but as a unilateral war initiated by the USA.

Given widespread public opposition to military involvement and concerns that participation in the Iran war would significantly strain the domestic economy, Britain is unwilling to bear the costs of Washington's strategic gamble, he added.

In an interview with *The Mirror*, the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves, said she was "very frustrated and angry" at America's actions as families across Britain suffer the consequences.

"This is a war that we did not start. It was a war that we did not want. I feel very frustrated and angry that the US went into this war without a clear exit plan, without a clear idea of what they were trying to achieve,"

she added.

Wang said that the divide between the USA and the UK is not an isolated incident, but a reflection of widening fractures within NATO with France, Spain and Italy also refusing to become involved in the conflict, underscoring Europe's deeper ambivalence between strategic autonomy and dependence on the USA.

Amid mounting pressure from Washington, tensions between the USA and NATO allies also flared up as President Trump previously said he was considering pulling the USA out of the Western military alliance due to its European members' refusing to send ships to unblock the Strait of Hormuz.

The logic behind US pressure on Europe is the expectation that allies should unconditionally share the costs of hegemony, while European governments are primarily concerned with avoiding simultaneous entanglement in a war in the Middle East and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict says Wang. "In the longer term, this approach of coercion over consultation is likely to accelerate Europe's push toward defence autonomy, while eroding NATO's cohesion and the foundations of mutual trust in ways that may be difficult to reverse."

Global Times



Workers' Notes

Fuel crisis – Scrap fares!

by New Worker correspondent

Scrapping fares on public transport is an ideal way to respond to the soaring fuel prices caused by the war in the Gulf, Fare Free London says. Abolishing fares makes public transport more attractive to drivers, to help get them out of their cars. It also gives instant support to public transport users, whose journeys are far less fuel-intensive.

The Fare Free London campaign was set up in February 2024 to promote free public transport as a way to open the capital to all, to support low-income households in the face of rising costs, and to tackle air pollution and climate change. They have won substantial support from trade unions and community organisations and are working with our allies towards establishing a national campaign.

“Free public transport would reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, and on world markets where prices are set by events outside our control,” Pearl Ahrens of Fare Free London said.

The fuel price shock from the American-Israeli attack on Iran is likely to last a long time. The UK will be hit harder than



any other country in the G20, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has said. And the EU has warned that cutting taxes on petrol could cause a fiscal crisis.

This terrible war should force a permanent rethink of the transport system, Fare Free London believes. The drastic changes necessitated by climate change are long overdue, and the war just adds to the urgency of addressing energy vulnerabilities now.

This is an opportunity to put in place policies that make our transport system more resilient to shocks – both fuel shortages and economic crises – and work towards a sustainable transport system in the longer term. Instead of cutting taxes on fuel, which is already heavily subsidised, we should try and save fuel by encouraging people to travel on public transport.

“It is wonderful to see the Scottish Greens putting free bus

travel in their manifesto,” Ahrens said. “And at UK national level, the call by Ed Davey of the Liberal Democrats, for 10 per cent off rail fares and a £1 cap on bus tickets, is very welcome.

“But we can and should go further. National and local authorities in several countries have already implemented free public transport, in response to the war. It should be at the top of the UK and London political agenda.”

In Asia, municipal authorities have turned to free public transport to shield people from the worst effects of the sharp increases in oil prices.

In Pakistan, the state of Punjab (the largest state in the country, with 125+ million population) and the capital, Islamabad, have made public transport free for a month. The Punjab Mass Transit Authority reckons that more than 800,000 passengers are benefiting from the policy each day, and the provincial government is considering expanding the bus fleet to cope.

In Australia, the states of Victoria and Tasmania have also made public transport free temporarily. Municipal authorities in Ho Chi Minh city, the capital of Vietnam – which has a population of 14.5 million, much bigger than London’s – are considering a permanent scheme.

Free public transport as an emergency measure is not problem-free, but its implementation in British cities would be a welcome relief from the cost of tickets. Evidence from Montpellier in France, where public transport has now been free for two years, is that a properly managed scheme in a European city works very well.

In the run-up to the 7th May

elections, more than 170 candidates have signed a pledge to “use our platforms to call for the extension of free public transport”. Fare Free London, together with Fare Free Yorkshire, Better Buses for West Yorkshire, West Yorkshire Needs a Tram, Tipping Point UK and the Greener Jobs Alliance, are backing the initiative – and they hope to gather more support between now and election day.

Uni workers strike over pay

by New Worker correspondent

Unrest on the campus – and this time it’s coming from the workers who keep the wheels of academia rolling. Naturally we start at the top of the tree, with the University of Cambridge. Here Unite the Union is fighting for the newly minted concept of the “Cambridge weighting” supplement to match that of the University of Oxford, from which some Cambridge scholars broke away in 1209 in protest at the hanging of three students for killing a local townswoman, normally a pardonable case of student high jinks in those days.

On Tuesday and Wednesday over 500 Cambridge workers took to the picket lines after the well-heeled university imposed a worthless 1.4 per cent pay increase for 2025/2026. Unite is now fighting for a pensionable local pay supplement for all staff to address the exceptionally high cost of living in the Fenland city (30 per cent above the national city average).

Two years ago Oxford introduced a pensionable Oxford University Weighting of £1,500 per year, last August it was increased by 15 per cent to £1,730 and extended to all non-clinical staff. There is nothing like this at Cambridge apart from a 2.5 per cent interim payment, which could be withdrawn at any moment.

The same union is also engaged in industrial action at five universities north of the border. On Friday 1,100 workers took part in a 24-hour strike in protest at low pay offers. The action took place at the universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde, Edin-

burgh’s Napier and Heriot Watt universities and at the burnt down Glasgow School of Art. As at Cambridge the union represents workers in non-academic roles within the higher education institutions, including estates and security staff alongside cleaners, technicians, libraries and administrative roles.

They justly grumble at UK universities imposing a 1.4 per cent pay offer for 2025/26 on the Scottish university workforce, well below the 3.6 per cent RPI inflation rate. This battle is a small part of the annual pay talks between the joint trade unions and the Universities & Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) involving 138 UK higher education institutions for 2026/27.

This time round unions in higher education are demanding an increase of at least the inflation rate plus three per cent or £3,000, whichever is the greater – to be paid in full in August 2026, with a minimum hourly rate of pay of £15. This will go some-way towards the 30 per cent fall in real terms since 2010.

Unite lead officer for higher education Alison MacLean said: “Thousands of Unite members working in higher education have faced years of real-terms pay cuts. Our members have no option but to fight back against repeated threats of compulsory redundancies, and cuts to their terms and conditions. This funding crisis has also come about as a result of gross financial mismanagement and incompetence at some universities.” She can say that again, at Aberdeen and Dundee universities similar tales can be told.

To this one might add that the SNP government has frozen the per-student funding model since 2013–14, resulting in real-term investment in undergraduate teaching fall by 19 per cent.

Earlier this month UCU members at the University of Edinburgh went on strike to oppose management’s plan to cut up to 1,800 jobs in order to cut £140 million. The vice-principal’s £422,000 salary was not among the planned cuts...

Meanwhile, in the former ‘People’s Republic of South Yorkshire’, lecturers at Sheffield University are much further down the road of industrial action. Here UCU are facing a lock-

continued on page 4...

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...continued from page 3

out imposed by Management as punishment for taking action against compulsory redundancies late last year. UCU says: "These aggressive and escalatory measures amount to double deductions, with staff pay docked not only for strike days but also once they were back carrying out normal duties."

UCU general secretary Jo Grady declared: "They are driving through financially unnecessary job cuts while punishing staff – in a fashion reminiscent of the nastiest strike-breakers. This behaviour from vice chancellor Koen Lamberts and his team represents the very worst of the higher education sector, which is increasingly led by people, including former academics like him, who seem determined to destroy it."

In south London, lecturers at Goldsmiths, University of London, UCU members overwhelmingly voted for industrial action that will see a marking and assessment boycott as soon as legally possible. Again the dispute is over plans to make cuts, in this case £22 million, of which most will come from staff redundancies. UCU fears this could see a quarter of the 1,230 staff facing the axe.

While the university claims it needs to make the cuts because of falls in recruitment, national insurance increases and government cuts to the Office for Students strategic priorities grant, the union points out that the university has spent about £16 million on consultancy firms, lawyers and solicitors over the last few years, to say nothing on "eye-watering senior management pay rises". The university's pleas of poverty are not stopping it opening a new campus to replace studio space provision where the current lease is expiring and cannot be renewed.

UCU wants a moratorium on compulsory redundancies, a pause to the cuts process and instead of cutting course provision, demands management improve student recruitment.

These ongoing disputes strongly suggest that things would be better if there was more co-ordination between unions representing various grades of staff in the ancient and modern universities. The possibility of UCU becoming an industrial union, representing not just teaching staff but other university staff, is a remote one, although that has happened in some smaller further education colleges. While recent moves by

the teachers' National Education Union (NEU) to recruit support staff have led to strong opposition from other unions, there is clearly a need for more inter-union co-operation, and not just when staff are under fire.

Remembering the Gaza victims in Newcastle

by New Worker correspondent

Newcastle City Council has voted to erect a memorial honouring the victims of the genocide in Gaza. The stone tribute is expected to be installed within the Peace Garden at Newcastle Civic Centre later this year. The memorial will sit alongside similar commemorations already installed within the garden. When completed, this will become the first Palestinian memorial of its kind in the UK and Europe.

The proposal – initiated by the Palestinian community in the city, led by Mohammed Wafi, alongside a number of councillors – also includes planting an olive tree at the Civic Centre. It reflects the deepening ties between the British and Palestinian people and the growing solidarity with Palestinian rights and justice for the victims.

Councillor Habib Rahman, a former lord mayor of Newcastle, said that the cost of the memorial and tree planting would be covered entirely by the community. Rahman, who left the Labour Party over Gaza and now sits as an independent, said: "I am immensely proud of the



work undertaken to establish the Peace Garden. As a City of Sanctuary, it is fitting that Newcastle has a dedicated space for remembrance and reflection. It

reflects our city's long-standing tradition of solidarity, our stance against genocide and war, and our commitment to empathy and remembrance."

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

21st April 2006

POPULAR FORCES in Nepal have stepped up their campaign to overthrow the government of King Gyanendra and end the monarchy. The revolutionary forces, led by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN(M)], and the opposition parties launched a new wave of co-ordinated resistance and protest.

A four-day general strike began 6th April, called by the opposition parties, a coalition of seven parties that oppose the king, and backed by the revolutionary

forces. The CPN(M) and opposition parties reached a 12-point agreement in late December that calls for allied actions to end autocratic monarchy and bring about fair elections to a constituent assembly. The demonstrations have been called to challenge Gyanendra's assumption of dictatorial powers 14 months ago.

Gyanendra's forces quickly moved to violently quell the demonstrations, even though the CPN(M) initially declared a ceasefire in Nepal's capital, Katmandu, to ensure that its activities would not be used as an excuse for the government to violate the rights of the protesting people.

Government forces repeatedly fired on protesters, leaving four dead and dozens seriously injured. In Bharatpur, police shot dead a woman who was simply observing the protests from the balcony of her home. A protester in Banepa was killed when police fired on a crowd demonstrating against an earlier killing.

The United Nations Human Rights Office in Nepal has criticised the government and expressed "grave concern" over its violent tactics. Even the US and

British imperialists, who want a stable government in order to beat back the revolutionary forces more effectively, are now publicly distancing themselves from the king.

Meanwhile, the government has threatened to get "stricter" with the protesters by imposing extended curfews and granting its police forces shoot-to-kill orders.

The demonstrations have grown more militant as protesters attempt to protect themselves from violence at the hands of the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) and police. "Burn the crown" is the new slogan in Katmandu.

The top two leaders of the CPN(M) – Chairman Pranchada and Chief of Foreign Relations Baburam Bhattari – issued a statement promising that their party's armed wing, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), would take control of roads throughout the country in support of the general strike and destroy all royal statues and signs that refer to "His Majesty's Government". The statement also announced a new campaign to stop businesses from paying taxes to the royal government.

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On track to the future!

During his visit to China, To Lam, the Vietnamese leader and General Secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, twice chose to travel on China's Fuxing bullet train, spending a total of nearly 12 hours on board. Choosing the bullet train attracted wide international media attention. But, actually, riding China's high-speed rail is no longer a novelty for visiting foreign leaders. International dignitaries such as Russian President Vladimir Putin, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev have all chosen to travel on China's high-speed trains during their visits. In this sense, high-speed rail has become a shining calling card of China's manufacturing in the new era, offering the international community a direct way to experience it.

Why do so many foreign leaders choose to ride on China's high-speed trains? The answer goes far beyond simply feeling its remarkable speed. At a deeper level, they view modern railway construction as a way to observe "key code" behind China's high-quality development. In China, high-speed rail functions like a network of powerful arteries, tightly connecting once-distant regions. It facilitates the efficient flow and optimised allocation of production factors such as talent, capital and technology nationwide, providing solid support for major regional strategies including the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta, the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the Chengdu-Chongqing economic zone. The success of China's high-speed rail network reflects a concentrated embodiment of institutional strengths, industrial capacity and strategic planning.

Twenty years ago or so high-speed rail was still an expensive and scarce luxury mainly confined to Western



• Letting the train take the strain – Vietnamese leader To Lam travels south in a Chinese bullet train.

Europe and Japan. No country had built a high-speed rail network longer than 3,000 kilometres. Its high construction and operating costs made it even more unattainable for many developing countries. Europe once operated its famous high-speed rail route from London to Avignon in France, covering about 1,150 kilometres. In Japan, the longest Shinkansen hi-speed service was the Hayabusa express from Tokyo to Shin-Hakodate in Hokkaido, at about 823 kilometres.

Today, the global high-speed rail network spans more than 65,000 kilometres in total operating length – over 70 per cent of which is in China. By contrast, the high-speed rail journey taken by the Vietnamese leader To Lam – from Beijing to Nanning – exceeds 2,400 kilometres in a single trip, a striking comparison in itself.

Through its own practice China has fundamentally reshaped the global definition of high-speed rail, offering a reference model for modernisation in the Global South. Leveraging massive market demand, systematic technological integration, a comprehensive industrial system, strong manufacturing capacity and highly efficient engineering and construction

management, China has significantly reduced the unit cost of high-speed rail, transforming it from a technological showcase into an accessible nationwide network. China has not only built the world's largest high-speed rail network but has also pioneered a development path tailored to its national conditions – efficient and intensive in nature – forming a complete system of technical standards, construction management models and industrial supply chains. This replicable and scalable experience holds crucial reference value for the countries of the Global South seeking infrastructure modernisation and industrialisation.

Railway construction, particularly high-speed rail, plays a vital role in promoting closer people-to-people ties among different countries. Compared with aviation, railways are more cost-effective, have broader coverage and offer greater transport capacity; compared with highways they are more stable, safer and offer greater economies of scale. Students, tourists, scholars, media professionals, border residents and small business owners can cross into neighbouring countries more frequently thanks to new rail connections. Once such movement becomes routine, mutual

understanding between neighbouring nations and their peoples will increasingly be built on real-life interactions and concrete experiences, bringing the two societies from simply knowing each other to genuinely drawing closer to each other, thus narrowing the psychological distance between their peoples.

China has always adhered to the principles of extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit in railway cooperation, which is a vivid reflection of its open attitude and sense of responsibility as a major country. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway has ushered Indonesia into the era of high-speed rail; the China-Laos Railway has become a 'golden route' linking China with Southeast Asia, and core systems and equipment have been successfully applied in European countries such as Hungary and Serbia. In their joint statement, China and Vietnam agreed to make railway co-operation a highlight of their strategic partnership, which has also drawn widespread attention. More and more examples clearly show that China's high-quality development not only benefits its own people but also contributes to global infrastructure development and improves the well-being

of local communities.

This year marks the first year of China's 15th Five-Year Plan period. Looking ahead, by 2030 China's railway network is expected to reach approximately 180,000 kilometres, including about 60,000 kilometres of high-speed rail and a world-class modern railway network will be basically built. The sustained development of railways will further drive industrial upgrades across upstream and downstream sectors, from new materials and high-end equipment manufacturing to information technology and modern logistics, creating new economic growth points. For the world, this means more technological co-operation, talent exchanges and market opportunities. A French media outlet has marvelled that China, once merely a testing ground for high-speed rail technology, has now become a key driver of regional integration.

The story of China's high-speed rail is but a microcosm. Behind it lies a glorious chapter of a major country mastering core technologies through self-reliance and hard work, achieving leapfrog development and delivering benefits to its people. The speeding Fuxing bullet train carries the pride and confidence of the Chinese people, as well as China's sincere desire to share development opportunities with the world. The thundering China Railway High-speed trains are leading the trend of the times and racing towards an even broader future.

Global Times

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Waiting for Godot and the meaning of life

by Jenny Farrell

2026 marks the 120th anniversary of writer Samuel Beckett's birth. His play *Waiting for Godot* asks what is left of humanity when a third world war is unleashed.

"Great Carthage waged three wars. It was still powerful after the first, habitable still after the second. Gone without trace after the third." With this 1951 quotation, Bertolt Brecht encapsulates a fate that seemed all too plausible in the mid-20th Century – and which has again become disturbingly relevant today. It is precisely this vision of annihilation that Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* confronts. Opening on a bare stage – "A country road. A tree. Evening" – the play asks what is left of humanity when a third war is unleashed.

To fathom this, one must understand the man who wrote it. Born in 1906 into an upper-middle-class Protestant and Anglo-Irish family, Samuel Beckett would go on to become one of the most influential writers of the 20th Century. Beckett first went to Paris in 1928 as an English lecturer, where he was introduced to the city's avant-garde circles by his fellow Dubliner James Joyce – an encounter that would profoundly influence his future writing.

After years of moving between Ireland, London, Germany and France, he settled permanently in Paris in 1937, where he met his future wife, Suzanne



Deschevaux-Dumesnil. When the Second World War broke out, he decided to stay. In his words, he preferred "France at war to Ireland at peace". Following the Nazi invasion he joined the French Resistance, working clandestinely as a courier and interpreter. He narrowly escaped the Gestapo on several occasions. When members of his resistance network were arrested, Beckett and Suzanne were forced to flee to the village of Roussillon in the unoccupied zone in the South of France, where he continued to support the fight against fascism. For his dangerous work against the Nazis, the writer was later awarded both the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille de la Résistance.

Following the war Beckett returned to Paris and entered his most productive phase. He made the switch to writing in French, a choice that would define his artistic voice. Writing in a language not his own allowed him to achieve a sparser, more direct

style. This period produced his most significant works: the novel trilogy (*Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable*) as well as his first major play, *Waiting for Godot*. Written in 1948, the play is a prime example of this pared-down aesthetic, its language reduced to an essential, functional core.

The premiere of *Godot* in 1953 brought him sudden fame. Further masterpieces followed, including *Krapp's Last Tape* (1958) and *Happy Days* (1961). In 1969, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature – an honour he accepted reluctantly, largely to avoid the even greater media spectacle of a refusal. He continued to live as a recluse in Paris, writing increasingly shorter, radically minimalist texts and often directing his plays. Samuel Beckett died in Paris on 22nd December 1989 and was buried beside his wife at the Montparnasse Cemetery.

Beckett's experience of living under occupation – the constant

fear, the ever-present threat of betrayal and the profound fragility of life – would seep into the very fabric of his later work, informing the atmosphere of waiting, dread and precarious existence that defines *Waiting for Godot*. The play's bleak landscape is entirely consistent with the man who had risked his life for others in the Resistance and who would, in his art, lay human life bare to ask what, if anything, remains when everything else is gone.

Typically, when the play is performed today, the emphasis falls on its comic elements and its label as an 'absurdist' masterpiece – a work suggesting that life is inherently meaningless. Yet, this interpretation overlooks a crucial context. The Second World War had barely ended; the horrifying nuclear annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had left an indelible mark on the collective memory of humanity.

Although Beckett never explicitly states

it, *Waiting for Godot* effectively presents its audience with a scene after a nuclear inferno. He gives us an all but empty stage: a country road and a single, bare tree. Into this landscape he places two characters, Vladimir (Didi) and Estragon (Gogo), who do not live here so much as just about exist. These two men struggle to perform the most elementary of actions – removing a shoe, for instance, becomes an ordeal. They sleep rough and are regularly beaten by gangs at night. The violence is so commonplace that they barely remark upon it.

In this world, human experience has been reduced to a minimum: simply staying alive and performing, with immense effort, the simplest of tasks. *Homo sapiens*, it seems, have been stripped of the 'sapiens' part. The tree of life stands almost barren; in this play, it has become a possible prop on which to hang oneself.

Traditionally, plays begin with an exposition that leads to action, or

they plunge us directly into the middle of one. In *Waiting for Godot*, however, there is no prospect for action whatsoever. The play's first utterance – "Nothing to be done" – functions as a thesis: Didi and Gogo spend the entire duration waiting in vain. They have replaced the protagonists of the past – those who struggled against adversity and injustice, or who attempted to forge a meaningful life. The narratives that once served to endorse human goodness have been deprived of their meaning, including the vain hope for a saviour, God(ot), to arrive. In fact, the very act of waiting for God(ot) is what prevents any movement out of this state of paralysis.

In Irish, *go deo* means 'forever', adding a hidden layer to the title: Waiting Forever. Past certainties are not just questioned, but fundamentally undermined. Theatre as we know it has come to an end. Without action, there can be no plot. Without the possibility of progress, there can be no climax or resolution. Beckett does not simply write a play about meaninglessness; he forges a new dramatic form from meaninglessness itself. The audience, like the characters, is forced to endure the "nothing to be done" in real time, sharing in their experience of empty duration.

The idea of human perfectibility is finished. The parables of the Bible, once a source of moral guidance, have become useless; Didi and Gogo barely remember them. When Pozzo arrives and

asks Estragon his name, he replies “Adam”. It is a fleeting, almost throwaway identification, but its resonance is profound. Humankind has been reduced to what Shakespeare’s King Lear, in his madness, calls a “poor, bare, forked animal”.

Our two protagonists are not defined in class terms; they appear to be vagrants. Yet, they are not entirely alone. Not only do we hear of random violence against them, but at two points in the play – once in each act – Pozzo passes through, dragging a slave named Lucky on the end of a rope, treating him like an animal. Pozzo is a nod to the remnants of a ‘master’ class, one who still (or once again) possesses wealth and holds slaves. Lucky, in turn, echoes Shakespeare’s Caliban in *The Tempest* – the indigenous native of the island, kept ignorant and enslaved by the coloniser Prospero.

In the single, all-but-incomprehensible speech Lucky is allowed, he delivers a torrent of words that contains the play’s darkest truths. He speaks of “of a personal God ... outside (of) time...who...loves us dearly...and suffers... with those who...are plunged in torment... it is established beyond all doubt...that man... wastes and pines...for reasons unknown... fades away”. He concludes with the image of “labours abandoned left unfinished”. The essence of his tortured monologue might be distilled to this: God – or man – has left his labours unfinished.

This devastating core, however, is not delivered as a straightforward lament. Lucky’s speech, the longest in the play, is a chaotic collision of high rhetoric and low farce. Statements



of cosmic collapse are constantly interrupted by the banal and the trivial. The world-ending “great cold” is juxtaposed with the utterly mundane – “in spite of the tennis”. The names of the academic authorities Lucky invokes are pure nonsense: “Fartov and Belcher” among others. So, even as Lucky articulates the end of all meaning, the silly, petty details of daily life stubbornly persist. The universe may be dying, but there is still a tennis match to be played.

This seemingly absurd contrast is what makes the speech both hilarious and deeply unsettling. It suggests that total collapse and ordinary life are not opposites; they strangely, terrifyingly co-exist. In this sense, Lucky’s speech is the entire play in microcosm. It uses the wreckage of Western academic rhetoric to build a powerful and absurdly funny case for the perseverance of mundane existence, only to have that very case collapse under the weight of its futility. The speech ends with a final “unfinished”.

When Pozzo first encounters Gogo and Didi, he observes: “You are

human beings none the less...Of the same species as myself...Made in God’s image!” The line is delivered as a simple statement of fact, but its implications are devastating. Any aspiration to godlike form and intellect has been annulled – or perhaps the reverse applies: God is this stumbling, bewildered, half-existent creature.

When Pozzo and Lucky reappear in Act II, the decline has accelerated. Pozzo has gone blind, Lucky mute. Thinking itself has become an effort. On one occasion, Didi and Gogo contemplate suicide by hanging themselves from the bare tree. One reason they do not go through with it is that one of them might remain alive and therefore face existence alone. That, they conclude, is a fate worse than death. This seemingly small decision offers a glimmer of hope. Two characters, after all, form a small community, and they do help each other survive.

Beyond this mutual dependency, there is another, more profound example of common humanity. When Pozzo cries out for help in ris-

ing to his feet, Didi and Gogo hesitate, bicker, but then Didi declares “it is not every day that we are needed”. The statement is quietly profound. It acknowledges that Pozzo’s call for help is not addressed merely to two individuals, but to “all mankind”. And as Didi recognises “at this place, at this moment of time, all mankind is us, whether we like it or

not”. In that instant, the tramps become the sole representatives of human responsibility. Yet, Beckett undercuts even this fragile epiphany. Ironically, all four men end up on the ground, their cries for help going unheeded. Standing upright has become impossible. Purposeful labour and action no longer define us. Pozzo’s final words on the

subject are bleak: “They give birth astride of a grave, the light gleams an instant, then it’s night once more.”

Beckett’s play remains of immediate relevance to the world today. Like his contemporary Brecht, the Irishman warns of the ultimate destruction of human life. Yet, he leaves open the possibility that all is not lost. His characters still help each other in moments of need; that flicker of humanity persists. The tree bears a few leaves at the end of the play – it is not dead. The bond between Didi and Gogo, their refusal to abandon one another, is a fragile green shoot in the wasteland. Pozzo’s cry for help momentarily reminds them that they are, however reluctantly, “all mankind”. These tiny embers of compassion keep the play from descending into nihilism. Whether they are enough to make them – or us – finally “move on” is the question Beckett leaves to his audience.

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(USA)

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LETTERS

Our souls are not broken by the gallows and our will does not bow to tyranny. The 17th April – Palestinian Prisoner’s Day – comes this year at a pivotal historical moment, embodying the will of our people in the arenas of heroism and engagement against the Zionist extermination system. Amidst this scene the fascist onslaught intensifies with the approval of the so-called “Prisoner Execution Law”, which represents a dangerous shift toward the legitimisation of systematic murder and the transformation of prisons into slaughterhouses for execution under a criminal and racist legal cover.

On this day, we evoke the epic struggle etched by our prisoners inside the cells, transforming them into spaces of resistance and schools of revolutionary consciousness. Thus, the experience of captivity becomes a living embodiment of the battle of wills between freedom and oppression. The prisoners’ movement has proven to be an unbreakable vanguard of struggle, and the shackle is a helpless tool shattered upon the rock of the Palestinian people’s steadfastness and their faith in the justice of their cause.

On this occasion, we extend a salute of pride and esteem to the martyrs of the prisoners’ movement, and to our heroic prisoners, foremost among them the General Secretary, Comrade Leader Ah-

mad Sa’adat and the iconic leaders Marwan Barghouti, Hassan Salameh, Bassam Al-Saadi, Wajdi Joudeh, Ahed Abu Ghulme and all the other prisoners who embody the unity of the national struggle. We affirm that their sacrifices remain a continuous pledge in the conscience of our people until their full and unconditional freedom is attained.

This anniversary coincides with an unprecedented escalation in policies of repression and extermination, where prisoners are subjected to a systematic campaign led by the fascist war criminal Ben Gvir. This campaign targets their physical and moral existence through torture, isolation, medical neglect, administrative detention, and even starvation policies, denying children, women and the elderly the most basic necessities of life.

Prisons have been transformed into contemporary models of extermination camps, as is happening in the Sde Teiman detention camp with prisoners from Gaza, where the most horrific forms of abuse and physical liquidation are practised amidst shameful international silence. This scene represents a stark expression of the occupation’s fascist and racist nature and an outrageous exposure of the international community’s inability to enforce even the minimum standards of justice and humanity.

We in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, in commemoration of this occasion and out of our national responsibility, affirm the following:

First: We affirm that the prisoners’ issue is a national liberation cause that sits at the top of our priorities. We stress the necessity of redefining their status internationally as freedom fighters, while renewing our absolute confidence in the resistance’s ability to

devise the necessary means to extract their freedom.

Second: True loyalty to the prisoners is embodied in building a comprehensive national strategy and restoring national unity as a fundamental guarantee to safeguard their cause, and to provide them with political, legal and media protection to prevent any attempt to isolate them or marginalise their sacrifices.

Third: We demand the immediate internationalisation of the prisoners’ issue and their recognition as prisoners of war. We call for an international campaign to nullify the “Prisoner Execution Law” as a war crime, and to pursue those responsible for systematic killings and racist legislation before international courts.

Fourth: We call for the escalation of popular and global grass-roots action to break the barrier of silence, and to build an international solidarity front that practices actual boycott of the occupation. We salute the freedom detainees who were arrested for supporting our just cause, especially the cause of the prisoners.

Fifth: We hold the international community and the International Committee of the Red Cross fully responsible for the lives of the prisoners. We demand the dispatch of independent international investigation committees to uncover the fate of the prisoners, especially those from Gaza, and to put a definitive end to the policy of impunity.

A people who have offered this vast number of prisoners, and who have faced all instruments of repression, is a people that cannot be defeated and whose will cannot be broken. The battle to liberate the prisoners is a mirror of the greater battle for freedom and an integral part of the path toward comprehensive national liberation.

Political Department Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) Palestine

Diplomacy is an essential skill for the conduct of foreign affairs between nations. The earliest examples of its use may be traced back to the time of the pharaohs. Successful diplomacy requires sincerity without a hidden agenda or being used as merely a diversion to create time to cover preparations for intended aggression. With goodwill on both sides, an acceptance of the need of pragmatism and possibly the mediation of a third party the most difficult and complex problems may be overcome. A win-win conclusion is always better than never-ending war.

Examples of today’s foreign ministers, respected for their diplomatic skills, include Sergei Lavrov of Russia and Wang Yi of People’s China. For the West, with few exceptions, the art of diplomacy appears dead. For a positive outcome of a dispute it is necessary to understand and address the genuine fears and concerns of the other party; to be able to accept different points of view and to reassure each other that the benefits of trade and co-operation outweigh pointless risky conflict. One of the legacies of colonialism has been the tensions in border areas designated by imperialist powers as they carved up the globe with little regard for ethnic or cultural values.

Distrust and tension are fostered by the imperialist powers to serve their hegemony.

Within a continued colonial mindset almost all Western leaders regard their dominance and elitism as sacrosanct, with little regard for the concerns

continued on page 9...

Diary

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

UNTIL 10 JUNE
National Theatre of Scotland: Stand & Deliver: *The Lee Jeans Sit-in*. Touring play celebrating the 1981 Greenock women workers’ sit-in.

TUE 28 APR
Workers Memorial Day. Nationwide events. Details on TUC and STUC websites.

TUE 28 APR
Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament: ‘Nuclear Disarmament, Not Nuclear Hypocrisy’ – CND NPT Review Conference Side. 17:00–18:00. Zoom event. Register on CND website.

TUE 28 APR
Exiled Writers Ink: Tongues of Fire: A Tribute to Chilean poet Alfredo Cordal. 18:30. Instituto Cervantes, 15–19 Devereux Court (off the Strand), London WC2R 3JJ. Register on Eventbrite.

THUR 30 APR
Scottish Cuba Solidarity: *Comandante*. Oliver Stone film about Fidel Castro. 18:00–20:00. Unite HQ, 145–165 West Regent Street, Glasgow G2 4RZ. Book on Eventbrite.

THUR 30 APR
Arise – a Festival of Left Ideas: Trump’s War Drive – Globalise the Resistance. 18:30–20:00. Online meeting. Book on Eventbrite.

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. (Birmingham, Edinburgh, Leeds 2nd) (Glasgow, Manchester 3rd) (Chesterfield, London 4th).

SAT 2 MAY
International Ukraine Anti-Fascist Solidarity: Commemoration of 2014 Odessa Massacre. 14:00. Outside Ukrainian Embassy, 60 Holland Park, London W11 3SJ.

WED 6 MAY
Marx Memorial Library: *Capital* Reading Group, Free Taster Session. 19:00–20:30. Introduction to an online fortnightly course lasting until March 2027. Book on MML website.

THURS 7 MAY
Electoral Commission: Elec-

tions at a polling station near you. 07:00–22:00.

THURS 7 MAY
Billy Bragg and others: ‘Songs for the Workers’. One-off concert. 19:30–21:30. Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regents Park Rd, London NW1 7AY. Book on website www.efds.org/whats-on

SAT 9 MAY
Levellers Day. Includes commemoration in churchyard and march round village. 10:30–16:00. Warwick Hall, Church Green, Burford OX18 4RY.

SAT 9 MAY
Ipswich New Worker Group Meeting: The Socialist Alternative for a Stable and Peaceful World. 14:00–16:00. Ipswich Institute, 15 Tavern Street, Ipswich IP1 3AA.

SAT 9 MAY
Marx Memorial Library: The 1926 General Strike & Its Significance in 2026. Symposium. 11:00–16:00. Hybrid meeting. Book on MML website.

SAT 9 MAY
People’s History Museum: 1926 General Strike Centenary Open Day. 10:15–16:15. People’s History Museum, Left Bank, Spinningfields, Manchester M3 3ER. Book on Museum website.

SUN 10 MAY
East End Walks: Bakers and Bankers early Jewish life in London 1650s–1870s. 10:30–12:30. Book at <https://www.eastendwalks.com>

THUR 14 MAY
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Workplace Day of Action. Nationwide events.

THUR 14 MAY
Trades Union Congress: The General Strike 100 years on: in conversation with John Monks and Jonathan Schneer. 18:30–20:00. Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS.

SAT 16 MAY
Palestine Solidarity Campaign: Nakba Day demonstration. 12:00. London. Details TBA.

THUR 21 MAY
CND: No Nuclear War: Protest the expiry of New START. 12:00–14:00. US Embassy, 33 Nine Elms Lane, Nine Elms, London SW11 7US.

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

of others. Each theatre of conflict is exploited to suit their own geopolitical interests. The clowns, incompetents and arrogant bullies that rise to the top of bourgeois politics have no comprehension of the positive results of effective diplomacy. Boris Johnson on the contrary made every effort to undermine the Minsk agreement that provided a solution to the Ukraine tragedy. Others appear so submissive to the USA that they are incapable of any initiative whatsoever. And of course French President Macron can always be relied upon to come up with something totally impractical or absolutely stupid in times of crisis.

Goodwill, co-operation and harmonious development between nations are the primary objectives for socialist and other progressive nations. We need socialism and we need it now for a peaceful future.

John Maryon
Suffolk

Contrived rules conjured by the USA and Israel to justify genocide in Gaza and now Lebanon and Iran are egregious. So is the Western ignorance of the societies they seek to subdue. Let's all reject the Western intelligence

approach that starts with an imperialist outlook and then constructs an analytical framework around it. Hence it starts with the question "where is the next threat coming from?" rather than where is world peace going to come from?

There is little doubt that Western failure stems from succumbing to its own propaganda. Also, not seeking to understand those deemed adversaries. Surveying the catastrophic debacle caused by the illegal aggression against Iran we should point to the West's inability to appreciate how different Iran's understanding of victory is to that of Western ruling classes.

For the elites in the West victory is defined by the way they destroy their enemies. For the Iranian people victory is defined by the way they accept their resolve to fight.

Victory, to a certain degree, is not over the enemy. Victory itself is over yourself. Confronted by immeasurably greater power, it is the determination to fight that matters. Victory does not constitute destroying the enemy, but in resisting it.

Western 'sub-culture', as evidenced in the bombast and brutality of Trump and Netanyahu, demands the enemy be crushed and bombed back to the Stone

Age. In contrast, shaped by Persian political traditions, Islamic jurisprudence and a deeply embedded moral vocabulary, the Iranian leadership's carefully chosen words carry historical weight, moral framing and political intent. A tool of communication and positioning, correct interpreting is essential. The recent use of the word *diya* for instance, a phrase by Iran's new spiritual leader, Mojtaba Khameini, is interpreted in the West as "blood money" – implying a transactional "price", retaliation and revenge.

Correctly interpreted, *diya* refers to a form of compensation for unjust killing or injury. It belongs to a moral and legal system that includes retaliation – but also forgiveness and a range of responses rooted in justice, restraint and reconciliation. It reflects a world view in which justice is both punitive and restorative. Redress for individuals: stability for the broader social order.

Historically, a mechanism to prevent cycles of vengeance, it permits society to absorb loss and avoid perpetual violence. Invoking of concepts rooted in accountability rather than retaliation, obligation rather than escalation, it offers a potential 'off-ramp'.

Whether the rogue states USA and Israel want an off-ramp is highly questionable, given that they have abandoned international law and that they fear free speech, the so-called 'essence' of their sham 'democracies'.

A McKerl
Fife

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Scottish Political News

by our Scottish political affairs correspondent

"Absolutely disgusted" was how former MP Joanna Cherry described her present relationship with the SNP, which she represented at Westminster for nine years between 2015 and 2024. The now KC has well and truly spilled the beans in her memoir *Keeping the Dream Alive* and has announced her resignation from the party.

Nicola Sturgeon is chief among the dramatis personae in the book; Cherry admits effectively blackmailing Sturgeon in 2019 by threatening to go to the papers about her leader's plotting against Alex Salmond when the civil action against him turned into a criminal investigation. But she had long been in Madame Sturgeon's sights for daring to criticise her and her spouse on the party's NEC, to which she had been elected in defiance of La Sturgeon's wishes. Cherry denies the falling out was solely due to the vote-losing gender identity issue, saying it was due to other issues and the need for Sturgeon to keep the Greens on board.

In a case of the very black kettle calling the pot black, Sturgeon responded by calling Cherry a "deeply bitter individual" and her book "a work of fiction", an observation which was widespread about her own memoir, hilariously entitled *Frankly*. While it is possible that Cherry would be a loyal Sturgeonite had she been made Lord Advocate, as she had hoped, she makes some perfectly valid observations about the decline of the SNP since the departure of Alex Salmond.

The now non-SNP voter tells *The Times* that John Swinney is a weakling and

dismisses her "cowardly former colleagues" in the SNP who "sat on their hands while people like me were called transphobe and threatened with violence".

Soon after publication, the *Sunday Mail* published text messages from September 2018 and January 2019 among high-ranking SNP officials that seem to confirm Cherry's suspicions and Salmond's allegations, before he was cleared of 13 charges in March 2020. Immediately after he was cleared he claimed outside the Edinburgh High Court that there had been "deliberate fabrications for a political purpose".

The new messages were used in pre-trial court hearings, when Salmond's defence tried unsuccessfully to get them admitted as evidence to show that senior SNP figures and civil servants privately doubted some of the experiences that amounted to criminal investigations.

Salmond's former allies have responded by demanding a criminal investigation into the alleged plot, with some demanding a public inquiry.

Labour Deputy Leader Jackie Baillie has now joined in the fun and declared that "these messages raise serious questions for John Swinney and the SNP", adding that "it is outrageous that this information was withheld from the Scottish Parliament's inquiry into the issue and John Swinney has some serious explaining to do".

On the Campaign Trail

It remains to be seen what impact this will have on the SNP vote but it will certainly not attract waverers. But given the demise of Alba, nationalists hostile to Sturgeon and Swinney have nowhere else to go except to the Greens.

Elections are occasions for offering goodies to select groups of voters such as Scotland's luvvies, who are being wooed by most parties on the campaign trail.

The SNP promises to pilot a "Scottish Artists Minimum Income, learning from the experience in Ireland, to give targeted support to a number of practising artists and creative workers to give them the space to develop their craft, thrive professionally, and contribute to Scotland's cultural life". This is in line with the Equity union's call for the introduction of a basic income for the arts in Scotland to "allow artists to dedicate more time to their creative careers and tackle class privilege in the arts". But the proposed 'artists' grant, worth around £15,000, will probably not be open to comedians who make jokes about the SNP.

Scottish Labour has another pilot project in mind. It wants to spend £30 million to support 1,000 "creative entrepreneurs" with a new weekly wage for those who have "promising commercial plans". Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar says "we're going to make sure we deliver an effective budget where every pound is spent wisely rather than layer after layer of bureaucracy, quango after quango" while the Greens take a more indirect approach and want to levy £1.00 on each ticket sold at large venues to raise funds to subsidise the arts.

Meanwhile, Sir Keir Starmer (still Prime Minister at the time of typing) paid a flying visit to the Trident base at Faslane to welcome back a nuclear submarine after an unusually long voyage. He wisely kept out of sight and did not involve himself in Labour's Scottish election campaign. This enabled him to avoid any awkward questions about Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar who has twice called for Starmer's resignation...

New Worker Supporters' Groups...

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Reminiscences on Professor Vijay Singh

by Theo Russell

Comrade Vijay Singh had a close and friendly relationship with the New Communist Party for over 45 years.

Vijay became a friend of the NCPB when our former general secretary, Eric Trevett, visited India in conjunction with a visit to Kabul to meet leaders of the Afghan Saur Revolution. During that visit Eric struck up a lasting connection with Vijay. In those days Vijay spent much more time in London than in recent years, and he frequently spoke at NCPB social and political events. He was always extremely courteous and easy to get on with and completely lacking in self-importance. Such modesty stands out even more in India, where self-importance, especially amongst men and especially among political men, is not uncommon.

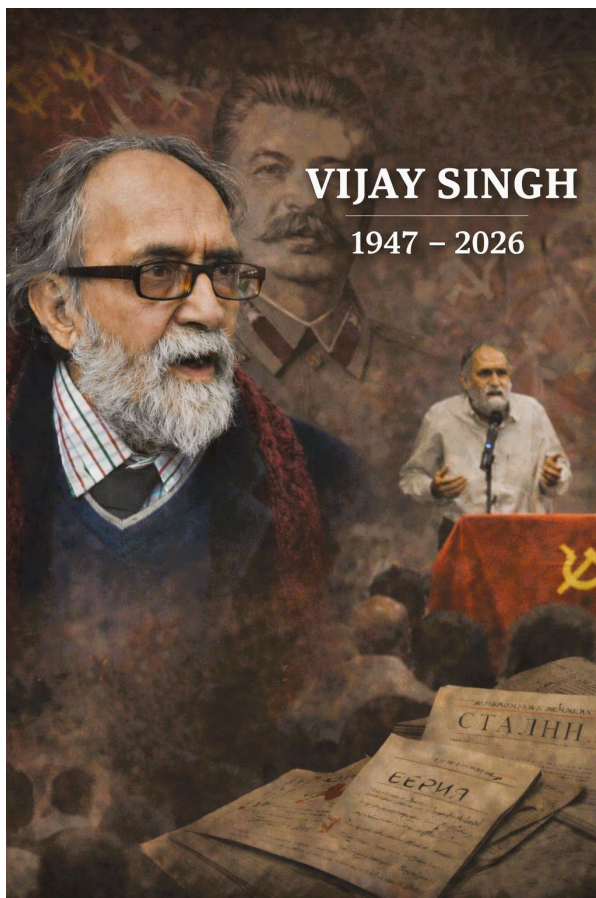
Vijay spent much of his early life in London, where his father was a senior diplomat at the Indian High Commission. We will always respect him for choosing to return and to live in India for most of his life in order to teach and to further the cause

of socialism rather than enjoying a comfortable middle-class life in the UK, perhaps as an academic, an option which would have been easily available to him.

Vijay Singh was for many years a highly respected and popular professor at Delhi University. He also made connections and organisational links with socialist and communist parties and trade unions throughout South Asia. As is well known, his daughter Atishi Marlena went on to become a cabinet minister and then Chief Minister of the Delhi administration in 2023–25, where she put many of Vijay’s principles into practice, representing the Aam Admi (Common Man) Party. In the last 20 years or so Aam Admi has attempted to return to the traditions of the left-socialist wing of the Congress Party in the 1950s and 1960s.

I met Vijay many, many times in London, in Delhi (I have a family connection in India) and in Moscow, which he used to visit regularly to carry out research at the Institute of Marxism-Leninism’s library. This research was mainly focussed on the Stalin period and Stalin’s relations with communist and workers’ parties and socialist governments from around the world. That research revealed many extremely useful examples of Stalin’s advice and guidance to foreign parties, including to the old Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB).

The relationship between communist parties and the Labour Party has been intensely de-



bated in Britain since Lenin’s day and still is at the present time. Vijay discovered and made public a large amount of extremely valuable historical documents. From our viewpoint, the most important dealt with the roles of Stalin and Nikita Krushchev, and Stalin’s discussions with CPGB leader Harry Pollitt on the *British Road to Socialism*, the “parliamentary road” and the role of the Labour Party, which was the basis of the CPGB’s electoral policy and its ultimate decline and dissolution.

But Vijay will probably be mostly remembered for creating the journal *Revolutionary Democracy* (RD), which has continued publication for many decades. RD became an important forum for parties and individuals around the world to debate the

But RD was more than a discussion magazine, Vijay used it to bring comrades together to educate and develop them as journalists.

Vijay was a controversial and sometimes dogmatic figure. Over the years the NCP had significant political differences with him over the divisions in the world communist movement following the collapse of the USSR and the people’s democracies of eastern Europe – and, above all, over the role of the Communist Party of China and the reforms that followed the end of the Mao era and the stand of the Russian communists in the wake of the counter-revolution that led to the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Vijay opposed the Russian intervention in Ukraine. And he distorted the role of Korean communist leader Kim Il Sung, who led the Korean people in the fight to defeat Japanese colonialism and US-led imperialism to build a modern socialist republic in the northern part of the Korean peninsula. But those differences did not affect our friendship or our great respect for him.

I personally shared many cultural interests

with Vijay, especially relating to Indian and Soviet art and cinema, and music from around the world. He even developed friendly contacts with the Institute of Russian Realist Art and arranged free entry for me when I was in Moscow.

Vijay was extremely well known and widely respected in India. During the COVID pandemic, despite having significant health problems himself, he used his influence and contacts to assist comrades from many different organisations, including those he had political differences with, in getting access to hospital treatment, which was under huge pressure at the time.

In recent years Vijay was unable to travel to London, where he still had close family members, but we spoke regularly by phone. I can’t forget that on every occasion he never failed to ask after other NCP comrades by name.

Vijay Singh will be deeply missed by members of the NCP as a friend and comrade, and by his many admirers on every continent. His legacy and contribution will be remembered far into the future, above all in India.

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Vince Cable:

A balanced view of China

This year marks the first year of China's 15th Five-Year Plan. China's gross domestic product grew by five per cent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, according to the latest data from the National Bureau of Statistics. Do you have confidence in China's economic outlook for the next five years? What is your view on China's five-year plan system?

Yes, I do. I have confidence in China's development over the next five years.

This is based on several factors: First, China has the ability to think and plan ahead. Second, the "new quality productive forces" should enhance overall productivity. In addition, the fact that the Chinese government has been very frank about the challenges makes me confident that they are on the right track.

We live in a very dangerous world, where barriers to trade and investment are now becoming serious, and China is having to adapt to that. China's plans are formulated based on its actual circumstances.

In China's 15th Five-Year Plan, developing and strengthening the private sector is a key priority. You have also expressed interest in China's private enterprises and mentioned that when conducting research in China, you particularly enjoy engaging with Chinese businesspeople. In your conversations with them, what aspects do you focus on most?

When one goes to Shenzhen, for example,

Global Times reporter Su Yaxuan talks to Vince Cable, the former Liberal Democrat leader who served as a Cabinet minister in David Cameron's Tory/Lib-Dem coalition government from 2010 to 2015. Cable shared his opinions on why he believes in China's five-year plans, as well as the lessons China's development trajectory over the last decade can offer to other countries.



you meet people from highly successful companies like BYD, which have emerged from virtually nowhere.

When I was in government in the UK, I had a lot of dealings with Huawei. Currently, the signals we're receiving indicate that China wants to give greater freedom to private enterprises, particularly in the tech sector. It's about finding a balance between the public and the private sector, the state and private enterprises, which has been partly the kind of magic formula that has driven Chinese growth. Understanding how it is sustained in the future is what interests me.

From an international standpoint, what valuable insights or lessons do you think China's 15th Five-Year Plan can offer to other economies?

I think it is right to continue to open up, as China does. The tariff war is a very damaging negative development, and it is affecting not just China, but also countries like Britain, which have long had very good relations with the USA. China is a great economic success story, and I think we have to acknowledge and praise the people who made this possible. There are probably very few other countries in the world that have achieved this kind

of success. Few have managed to progress from a very low level of economic development to become one of the world's leading economies, which is China's current status.

How do you view the certainty that China brings to the world?

Predictability is a great asset because businesses make investments on the basis of certainty. We live in a very uncertain world – it is inherently uncertain – but the US administration has made it much more unpredictable. Having a Great Power that is stable and predictable is a great asset. I would say the EU is also trying to

be stable and predictable in its policies, not jumping around all over the place. So, if the EU and China together can offset the very unpredictable and dangerous activities of the US administration, that would be very helpful.

You joined a Chinese social media platform last year and expressed a strong interest in engaging directly with Chinese citizens. You also noted the importance of clearing up misunderstandings between the people of the two countries. What motivated you to take this step and why does this kind of communication matter to you?

I've been fascinated with China for a long time. I first came 30 years ago. I then worked for a big international oil company. They were making a big investment in Guangdong and wanted to expand the Chinese business. I was sent out to do what we call scenario planning – some risk assessment, thinking about whether this was a good investment, and I gave a very positive report. It turns out the company has done very well; they made the right decision. So that was my first involvement. Then, when I was in the British Cabinet and government, one of my responsibilities was to build trade and investment relationships with China. I came to China several times.

I wanted to continue my interest. In recent years, I've been writing about China and visiting. I want to learn more because China is a vast and dynamic country. I cannot speak Chinese, but that matters less and less with instant translation. Still, the size, complexity and richness of its history fascinate me, and I want to know more.

I think also in the West, we have stereotyped views based on the fact that relations in the past have often not been good or have been quite shallow. My main ambition is to try to communicate a more balanced view of China to Western audiences. The important thing is to take what I would call a balanced and fair view of China and what's happening. If I do that, I think I will be doing some good.

China: a true friend of Cuba

by Lee Siu Hin

People's China has supported Cuba since its revolution in 1959. Shortly after, Che Guevara visited China in 1960 to secure comprehensive support for the newly born socialist island nation.

For the last year, since Donald Trump returned to the White House in 2025, he has continued the imperialist policy of all-out blockade against Cuba – first during his initial term (2017–2021) and then under Biden (2021–2025). In response, China has offered timely and critical assistance to Cuba when it was needed most. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson declared on 27th January that China “calls for immediate lifting of blockade and sanctions on Cuba. We will continue to support and assist Cuba.”

According to the Cuban government's 2025 report to the United Nations, the ongoing American economic blockade and sanctions caused an estimated over \$7.6 billion in damages from March 2024 to February 2025.

Since 3rd January, when the Americans invaded Venezuela – killing over 100 people and kidnapping President Nicolás Maduro and First Combatant Cilia Flores and jailing them in New York – President Trump has increased sanctions and threatened to invade Cuba. Losing oil imports from Venezuela and facing food shortages due to the US blockade, Cuba received immediate humanitarian aid from China (food) and Russia (oil).

As of April, China



• Blockade-breaking Chinese rice for Cuba!

has delivered 30,000 tons of rice; furthermore, an additional 60,000 tons have been pledged, bringing the total volume of food aid to 90,000 tons – enough to feed one million people for a year.

This is in addition to other Chinese humanitarian aid delivered last year. On 17th November 2025, China sent aid to Cuba following Hurricane Melissa. The shipment included food, solar lighting and roofing materials totalling 30 tons and completed in six flights.

In 2025, Chinese medical donations included over 44,000 three-way stopcocks destined for Cuban hospitals treating critical patients – an item Cuba cannot obtain internationally due to the US economic embargo. China is also collaborating with Cuba to install 5,000 solar systems in hospitals, polyclinics and maternity homes,

aimed at stabilising the electrical supply to the health care network facing an energy crisis created by the American blockade.

China is not just ‘giving’ but also helping Cuba upgrade its infrastructure. The economic aid provided by China constitutes a comprehensive, multi-pronged strategy, encompassing not only firm and robust political backing but also extensive, substantive assistance across vital sectors such as energy, food security and public welfare.

First, finance and infrastructure: In January 2026, Chinese emergency financial aid totalling \$80 million was approved. Then, in early April 2026, the two nations signed another 29 co-operation agreements, covering a wide spectrum of fields, including credit financing, port infrastructure development, technology transfer and biotech-

nology.

One good example is the public transportation project: In 2025, China provided spare parts for buses, including engines, tyres and batteries, to rehabilitate the Chinese Yutong bus fleet in Cuba. Over 100 previously sidelined buses in Havana were restored to service.

Another project is energy structure transition: China's export of solar photovoltaic (PV) equipment to Cuba skyrocketed from approximately \$5 million in 2023 to \$117 million in 2025. Plans are currently in place to assist in the construction of over 92 solar power stations by 2028.

With Trump 2.0's full-scale oil blockade against Cuba, Chinese solar technology will provide the opportunity for the country to break away from a petroleum-only energy structure. Confronted with the US strategy of severing Cuba's energy supply chains, China has chosen to address the is-

sue at its root by assisting Cuba in constructing an independent and sustainable economic system. Specific projects include aid for a 35-megawatt PV power plant (projected to save 18,000 tons of fuel annually), a 120-megawatt PV project and the donation of 5,000 sets of residential solar power systems. What can Chinese and Russian aid to Cuba teach Western activists?

Western, mainly white-run, activist groups always have their unrealistic fantasies. They believe that a few sit-ins, letter-writing campaigns or small-scale aid missions can change the world. They never consider – and even discredit – the efforts of the people, organisations and governments of the Global South. Everyone has a vital role to play in international solidarity. Western activists can also learn a great

deal from the positive experience of the Global South, notably from China.

Lee Siu Hin is a Chinese-American immigrant rights activist born in Hong Kong and from Los Angeles. He is the founder of the China-US Solidarity Network (CUSN), National Immigrant Solidarity Network (NISN) and Panda Aid. He is a long-term organiser in community, trade union, anti-war and immigrant rights activities and is committed to grass-roots struggles. He was also a long-term, volunteer reporter, producer and war correspondent for Pacifica Radio (KPFK in Los Angeles), and has worked in war zones in the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

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