



# **FRIENDS OF SOCIALIST CHINA**

**Commemorating 75 years of the  
People's Republic of China**



## HISTORY INSPIRES US TO BETTER RELATIONS

China's Ambassador to the United Kingdom **ZHENG ZEGUANG** surveys the enormous achievements of the People's Republic as it proudly celebrates its 75th anniversary and makes a resounding call for closer relations and friendship between our two countries and two peoples.

**SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO**, the birth of New China marked the end of more than a century of humiliation for the country, and the beginning of the historic process of China's rejuvenation.

Over the past 75 years, under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), Chinese people of all ethnic groups have united as one and worked diligently to achieve two phenomenal miracles of rapid economic growth and long-term social stability.

In the new era, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core, China has made historic achievements and gone through unprecedented transformation.

We have built a well-off society, and are working towards a great, modern socialist country in all respects. National rejuvenation is now on an irreversible course.

China's composite national strength has achieved historic growth. Once a poor country, China is now the world's second biggest economy, and the biggest manufacturer, biggest trader in goods, and the country with the biggest foreign exchange reserves.

Based on constant prices, China's GDP in 2023 is 223 times larger than that of 1952. The average annual growth rate has been 7.9%.

China has become a scientific and technological powerhouse, and important advances have been made in the country's national defence capabilities.

China is home to the world's biggest middle-income group with the best growth potential. We have put in place the world's largest medical, educational and social security systems. The quality of people's lives has seen continuous improvement.

China's development has been an engine for the global economy. From 1979 to 2023, China's contribution to global economic growth averaged 24.8% annually, and for the period between 2013 and 2023, the figure was over 30%.

China itself is making remarkable progress in green and low carbon transition and is now the world's biggest clean energy producer. In the meantime, China's 'new three', namely, new energy vehicles, lithium batteries, and photovoltaic products are enabling other countries to expedite their transition.

As a developing country itself, China feels the desire of other developing countries for modernisation and is actually facilitating the modernisation of the Global South, through the Belt and Road Initiative and South-South cooperation.

By the end of 2023, the accumulated investment made by China in Belt and Road partner countries reached over two trillion RMB.

Chinese companies have helped to build Latin America's first ultra-high-voltage transmission line, Africa's first modern electrified railway, and its first digital mining project, among many other infrastructure and livelihood projects in developing countries.

China's development has injected positive energy into world peace. Following an independent foreign policy of peace, China has been building friendship and cooperation with all countries on the basis of mutual respect, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit.

Over the past 75 years, China has never initiated any war or conflict and has never occupied an inch of other countries' territory. We have always worked for peace and dialogue, and the political settlement of international disputes.

China has sent more troops to UN peacekeeping missions than any other permanent members of the Security Council. We are now the second biggest funding contributor to both the UN and its peacekeeping operations.

In the face of increasing volatility and transformation around the world, we call on all countries to work together to build a community with a shared future and call for an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalisation.

We stand ready to work with all parties to earnestly implement the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and the Global Civilisation Initiative, so as to bring about more stability and economic growth to this turbulent world.

As we speak, the Chinese people are going all out to achieve modernisation through our own path. Daunting as our mission may be, we have full confidence in achieving our goals.

In the next five years, we will complete over 300 reforms and further enhance our institutions in different sectors, as set out at the third plenum of the 20th CPC Central Committee.

With these measures, China's productivity and social vitality will be further unleashed, the development momentum further reinforced, and new opportunities will be created for China's cooperation with other countries.

The United Kingdom was among the first major Western countries to recognise New China. And it has been 52 years now since the two countries established full-fledged diplomatic relations.

History has taught us a lot about the relations between these two countries:

- ★ Despite the differences in political system, history and culture, we have a lot in common and extensive shared interests.
- ★ Exchanges and cooperation conform to the common aspiration of our peoples and serve the fundamental interests of both sides.
- ★ With our respective advantages in economy, education and culture, there are great potentials for collaboration.
- ★ We can contribute to the resolution of major international issues by working together, and this is also our responsibility as two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council.

Last month, President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Keir Starmer reached important common understanding in their phone call. They agreed that we should uphold mutual respect, enhance engagement, and expand cooperation.

And recently, Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Foreign Secretary David Lammy met in Laos, Vice Premier He Lifeng and Chancellor Rachel Reeves talked over the phone, and so did our energy ministers. Our two militaries have just conducted their consultations on defence strategies.

Going forward, we should work together to follow up on the understanding between our leaders and build a stable and mutually beneficial relationship.

The development of China-UK relations needs the support of people across different sectors from both countries.

We never forget the "Icebreakers" who opened the doors for trade between China and the UK in the 1950s.

We never forget that generation of statesmen from both countries who made the strategic decision to establish diplomatic relations 52 years ago.

And we never forget all those who have worked tirelessly to help connect our two peoples over the past seven decades.

All of them continue to give inspiration to us today.

I call on all of you to continue to support and take an active part in China-UK relations and make new contributions to the steady development of this relationship.

*The above article is the main body of the speech delivered by Chinese Ambassador Zheng Zeguang at the reception he hosted on the evening of September 25 at the London Peninsula to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.*

Friends of Socialist China is a platform based on supporting the People's Republic of China and promoting understanding of Chinese socialism.

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# PEOPLE'S CHINA AT 75

**KEITH BENNETT** surveys the People's Republic's first 75 years arguing that the vast changes rest on an essential continuity

**ALTHOUGH CHINA WAS THE WORLD'S** biggest economy for most of the last two millennia, since Britain launched the first Opium War in 1839, the country was reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. Not for nothing is the ensuing period known by the Chinese as the 'century of humiliation', marked by unequal treaties, foreign aggression, civil wars and ultimately a victorious revolution.

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, China was one of the poorest societies on earth. Illiteracy was as high as life expectancy was low.

The subsequent political trajectory of the People's Republic essentially falls into two distinct phases, the second commencing with the launch of the policy known as 'reform and opening up' from the end of 1978.

The first period is often described as one of following the Soviet model.

There is some truth to this, just as contemporary China still draws on it to some extent, but it is far from the whole story.

For example, even in its most radical phases, the Chinese revolution never completely rejected a role for the national bourgeoisie.

This in turn meant that rather than a single party system, as in the Soviet Union, China retained, and retains, a multi-party, consultative system, based on acknowledging and upholding the leading role of the Communist Party.

Significantly, the peasantry (with some deviation during the period known as the Great Leap Forward, 1958-62), was not taken as a source of what might be termed 'socialist primitive accumulation' to benefit the cities and the promotion of heavy industry. Rather, policies tended to reflect the fact that the peasantry constituted the majority of the population and, even more that, they were the bedrock of the revolution.

The achievements of the Mao era should not be underestimated or denigrated. They were among the most stupendous in human history.

Despite the terrible years of 1958-62, and the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, life expectancy in China grew by one year for every year that Mao was in power.

From being practically the poorest country on earth, Mao's China solved the basic problems of feeding, clothing, housing and educating almost a quarter of the world's population, provided basic medical care to the whole population, brought literacy to the overwhelming majority, massively improved the social position and role of women, and so on.

Why then was it necessary to make such a radical turn in 1978?

For all its progress, China remained at the time of Mao's death in 1976 a very poor country, although the basic necessities of life were more or less guaranteed.

Whilst famine had been eliminated, food was still strictly rationed. Xi Jinping, when recalling his young days working with farmers in an old revolutionary base area, has often said that his dream was that one day the villagers would be able to eat meat and eat it often.

Although disparities and inequalities remained, China under Mao may be considered to have been one of the most equal societies on earth, but to a considerable extent, it was a 'socialism of shared poverty'.

Moreover, huge changes were underway globally. Countries and regions around China were developing rapidly, albeit inequitably.

However, this capitalist development in the region was skillfully turned into a positive factor by China as its principal source of investment in the first stage of reform and opening up.

The eagerness of investors to enter the Chinese market had a number of causes – from patriotism on the part of much of the Overseas Chinese bourgeoisie, to awareness of the size and potential of the Chinese market. From the American defeat in Indochina and partial retreat from Asia to a cynical desire to perpetuate and exacerbate the Sino-Soviet split.

For China, such investment was crucial.

It provided what the country desperately needed – a faster pace of industrialisation and employment for those leaving the countryside to begin urban life; guaranteed

export markets; skills and technology transfer; capital; technical and vocational training; and advanced scientific management.

None of this would have been possible – at least not on the same scale, to the same extent and at such a rapid pace – without the foundations laid by Mao. Without a basically educated, literate and trained workforce. Without housing and medical care. Without a transportation network and paved roads linking the whole country.

This is a major reason why Xi Jinping, from practically his first remarks when he was elected General Secretary of the party in 2012, has consistently stressed that the two phases of China's socialist development should not be counterposed to one another, but rather be seen as two parts of a single revolutionary whole, one resting on the foundations laid by the other.

**Whilst China remains, in its own words, in the primary stage of socialism, the overall goal is now to build a modern socialist country in all respects by 2049, when the People's Republic will celebrate its 100th anniversary.**

In the last four-and-a-half decades, from a marginal position, China has become the world's second largest economy. It is the biggest manufacturer, largest exporter, and the major trading partner for two thirds of the world's nations. It has rocketed up the value chain, increasingly leading the world in innovation and R&D. In just a few years, the whole country has been covered in a network of high-speed rail, accounting for some 70 percent of the world's total. And now Xi Jinping is emphasising the development of new, high quality productive forces, essentially conforming to the fifth industrial revolution.

Of course, no change as rapid and radical, and on so vast a canvas, as the process of reform and opening in China could possibly unfold without, as a secondary aspect, some negative features.

Whilst almost everyone has, over time, become much better off, what was once probably the world's most equal society has become highly unequal.

Massive damage was done to the environment and ideological and political work weakened.

This is essentially what Xi Jinping has been working tirelessly to correct since he assumed

the leadership, inaugurating what the Chinese now call a new era, meaning a new stage in the long march towards developed socialism.

Among the key features of this new era are:

- ★ A merciless and ceaseless campaign against corruption.
- ★ A rectification of the party's ranks, decisively returning to the concept of serving the people.
- ★ A massive, targeted campaign resulting in the historically unprecedented elimination of extreme poverty across the whole country, with careful follow-up to ensure that people do not slip back and that their lives continue to improve.
- ★ Tackling pollution, preserving the environment, safeguarding biodiversity, leading the world in renewable energy, building an ecological civilisation at home, and leading the global fight against climate catastrophe.
- ★ Rolling out by far the world's largest programme of medical care and insurance, and old age pensions, albeit ones that remain in many respects rudimentary and with great scope for improvement. However, unlike the situation in our country, the process is going in the right direction.
- ★ Ensuring that all sectors of the economy work in the overall interests of socialism. In the private sector, relevant measures include greater regulation and supervision of the technology industry and property and real estate, including a major new drive to promote social housing; the taking of 'golden shares', partial ownership, or seats on the board of major private companies by the party and state; the organisation of party committees to exercise a supervisory role in private firms; greater unionisation of the workforce, including in new economic sectors; and the revival of a system of workers' congresses in medium sized enterprises upwards.
- ★ A reaffirmation of the central and guiding role of Marxism.
- ★ An increasingly proactive foreign policy, with the strategic goal of building a community of shared future for humanity and featuring increased support for the other socialist countries and a more dynamic engagement with the international communist movement.

Whilst China remains, in its own words, in the primary stage of socialism, the overall goal is now to build a modern socialist country in all respects by 2049, when the People's Republic will celebrate its 100th anniversary. This is truly something that will change the world.

## Robert Griffiths General Secretary, Communist Party of Britain

**Inspired by Russia's Bolshevik Revolution, the Communist Party of China (CPC) held its founding congress in July 1921.**

With the inability of the nationalist Kuomintang to consolidate its authority and therefore its failure to lift the country out of its semi-colonial and semi-feudal state, intellectuals and workers had begun studying the ideas of Marxism.

Since Britain's seizure of Hong Kong in 1841, other imperialist powers had carved up Chinese territory from Manchuria in the north to the island of Taiwan in the south, also taking control of bustling port cities from Shanghai down to Canton (now Guangzhou).

The British, Japanese and French ruling classes had waged wars, imposed treaties and suppressed popular rebellions in order to enforce their commercial interests, often in collaboration with the Qing dynasty or local warlords.

In 1919, student protests erupted in Beijing against the decision of the Great War allies to maintain their 'international settlements' in China and specifically to transfer control of Shandong province from Germany to Japan. The May 4th Movement raised the banner of national sovereignty and democracy against this fresh humiliation.

Britain's communist party, the CPGB, formed the following year, was well aware of its responsibility in the 'belly of the beast' to oppose British imperialism's machinations. The party's press supported and reported on the struggles of Chinese workers, students and peasants.

The CPGB also endorsed the line of the Communist International (the 'Comintern') that the CPC work with the Kuomintang in the fight for a 'new democracy'. From 1923, Soviet aid helped the movement to reorganise and re-arm.

Rail and dock workers, coal miners and seafarers took industrial action as feudal warlords deposed one another and the Kuomintang prepared for a major military push northwards to overthrow the warlords and unite the country. However, the death of its leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen enabled divisions to deepen within the movement and for right-wing forces to gain ascendancy.

## Britain's Communists and China

In May 1923, after a Japanese employer shot dead a CPC trade unionist, protestors filled the streets of Shanghai, only to be gunned down by British colonial police. Millions of people then struck and marched across China, some clashing fatally with British and Japanese security forces.

The CPC rapidly grew and built trade union and local strike committees, culminating in the formation of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions. Peasant associations were set up in the countryside.

In Britain, the CPGB launched a militant 'Hands Off China!' propaganda campaign of leaflets, meetings and marches. Labour Monthly editor Rajani Palme Dutt declared China's example as one which 'lit up the world'. The ebb of European capitalist-imperialist expansion had begun; the subject nations were finding their way to freedom.

Britain's workers had a duty to demand the complete withdrawal of all British forces and garrisons from China – something the TUC and Labour Party had failed to do.

As the National Revolutionary Army advanced northwards in 1926, organisations of workers and peasants grew rapidly to the alarm of warlords, landlords and capitalists within China and beyond.

The CPGB press publicised these gains and miners' leader Arthur Horner moved an emergency resolution at the TUC conference, warning that any British military intervention in China would be aimed at the Soviet Union as well.

The party newspaper Workers' Weekly exposed Foreign Office plans to split the Kuomintang by sending diplomat Miles Lampson, 1st Baron Killern, to China. His previous intrigues in Japan and Siberia had failed to overthrow the revolutionary regime in Russia.

His new job was to promise recognition of a future Kuomintang regime, provided the Nationalists turn on their Communist allies. This duly happened in April 1927, after British and US warships on the Yangtze river bombarded newly liberated Nanjing.

In league with imperial police and local criminal gangs, the Kuomintang, now under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek, swooped in Shanghai and other cities to disarm the workers and kill or imprison many thousands of actual or suspected communists.

Chiang's regime received almost instant recognition in London, Paris, Rome and

Washington DC.

Two months before the massacres, Tom Mann had travelled to Canton (Guangzhou) on a mission for the Red International of Labour Unions. Speaking on arrival, he accused the 'British imperialist pirates' of filling history with many bloody pages, oppressing hundreds of millions of colonial peoples. Over the next five months, Mann addressed dozens of meetings in China, joined workers on picket lines and led a mass march against the arrival of thousands more imperialist troops.

He remained a tireless champion of Chinese workers and the CPC until his death in 1941.

As Communist MP for West Fife from 1935, Willie Gallacher took up the cudgels for China in his maiden speech. Why, he wanted to know, had the National Government refused to back the League of Nations against Japan's invasion and occupation of China's Manchuria since 1931, yet now sided with the League against Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (Ethiopia)? In both cases, the British government was doing whatever served the interests of British railway shareholders.

Throughout that decade, Gallacher and the CPGB opposed any diplomatic recognition of Japan's puppet state in northern China, challenged police actions against demonstrators in Shanghai, condemned plans to build British military barracks on the Chinese mainland and, in 1937, called for more medical aid to Chinese cities under military attack from Japan.

The CPGB and its Daily Worker newspaper supported a new CPC-Kuomintang united front in the fight against Japan's 'military-fascist clique'. By the time of Japan's surrender in August 1945, the war had cost China between 20 and 35 million civilian and military lives.

After Chiang Kai-shek, aligned with the United States, then refused to establish a democratic coalition government, that would include the CPC, a second civil war broke out in 1946. The defeated Nationalists took refuge in Taiwan three years later.

As ever, the CPGB defended the actions of the CPC, including in the 'Yangtze Incident' (1949) when British military vessels were hit in the crossfire between Nationalist and Communist forces. HMS Amethyst ran aground and 49 British service personnel perished.

Naval personnel and bereaved relatives

besieged Communist Party events in Dartmouth and Plymouth, injuring general secretary Harry Pollitt. Communist MP Phil Piratin replaced Pollitt at a reconvened Plymouth meeting.

He charmed the 'good chaps in uniform', recited a brief history of British plunder and aggression in China, before politely but firmly reprimanding those who had assaulted a 'very fine working class leader' one week earlier. He then accepted the offer to join some of the audience for a drink and a chat in the public house next door.

Communist parties across the world greeted the proclamation of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949.

For Britain's Communists, 'the Chinese revolution has freed hundreds of millions from the grip of the landlords and the foreign bankers'. Instead of a massive rearmament programme, Britain should pursue peaceful economic, political and cultural relations with countries choosing a socialist path.

A number of businesspeople, among them Communist Party members, led the first ever western trade mission to the People's Republic in July 1953. This 'Icebreaker Mission', which is still recalled by China's leaders, led to the formation of the 48 Group of British Traders with China.

Communist and left Labour MPs successfully urged the Attlee government to recognise Mao Zedong's government. But before the end of 1950, British forces were fighting the Chinese People's Volunteer Army in Korea. US troops, and others from satellite nations under a UN flag, had intervened to rescue the southern dictatorship from the northern Communists and were now advancing through People's Korea towards China.

The CPGB conducted a courageous 'Hands Off Korea!' campaign of civil disruption as the Chinese forces joined their Korean allies in driving Western military forces back to Korea's north-south partition line.

In its programme, The British Road to Socialism, (1951) the CPGB condemned the Labour government for forming an imperialist 'war bloc' with the Tories and American big capitalists against the Soviet Union, New China, Europe's 'people's democracies' and the colonial peoples struggling for independence.

*Part II of this article will appear in the Morning Star on Tuesday 1 October - 75th Anniversary Day of PRC*

# Andrew Murray: The evolving significance of the Chinese Revolution

**THERE IS A STORY**, possibly apocryphal, regarding a parliamentary by-election in St Pancras, north London, in 1949. The Communist Party stood a candidate and, amidst a deteriorating Cold War atmosphere, polled fairly dismally. Johnnie Campbell, a laconic Scotsman central to the CPGB's leadership for decades, was dispatched to the locality to rally the troops in the aftermath. Surveying his dispirited comrades, he supposedly declared: "Well, things aren't going our way in St Pancras right now...but we've won in China!" To many, that was the immediate significance of the Chinese revolution. For millions of Communists and sympathisers around the world, as well as oppressed masses in the colonies and semi-colonies, the victory of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the party-led People's Liberation Army was a huge advance – really the greatest conceivable – in a worldwide process of socialist revolution.

That was one evaluation, in its own time, of the significance of the Chinese revolution. Perhaps it seems archaic today. That may speak to the wisdom attributed to Zhou Enlai in 1971, almost certainly apocryphally in this case, that it was too early to judge the impact of the French Revolution (he was likely actually referring, more reasonably, to the events of 1968).

As such, any judgement on the significance of the great revolution in China on its 75th anniversary must be provisional. 75 years is not so very long. We would speak of it as roughly a single lifetime and this brings a pertinent point to mind: A citizen born in China today can expect to live three years

longer, to the age of 78. In 1949, they would not have expected to see their forty-fourth birthday.

There is the significance of a single statistic, probably the most important of all. "Live long and prosper" as Mr Spock enjoined in Star Trek and People's China has made good on that Vulcan salutation. More than a billion people are living longer and prospering as never before.

Perhaps the significance of the People's Republic of China proceeds along three distinct but closely entwined axes.

The first is the "standing up" of China itself, its transformation from the mutilated prey of sundry imperialisms and a laggard in world standards of social development, into a mighty power in sight of having the world's largest national economy. This reverses what has been called the 'great divergence' in economic power and prosperity, which began with the 19th-century opium wars, imposed on China by the British, which opened up an enormous gap in favour of the west over succeeding decades. This is the developmental axis.

Second, it both represents and further encourages a global shift of power from the West European/North American bloc, which dominated two centuries of history, towards what we now call the Global South. It challenges the monopoly of global violence at the state level exercised by the United States and its allies. This is the democratic and actually anti-imperialist axis.

Third, by maintaining a socialist orientation after other developments in that direction have faltered it both keeps

open the possibility of plural systemic options in the world, defeating Washington's dreams of ideological unipolarity, and prevents socialism itself from being pushed into the shadows of history, even as it reconceptualises what socialism might mean (as revolutionary movements have always done). That is the socialist axis, and it may be the most contested on the left.

The foreign policies of the Chinese state has gone through several modifications since 1949. Initially, it aligned closely with the Soviet Union, fought the US to a stand-still in Korea and played a full part in the world Communist movement while paying particular attention to trying to rally the nations just emerging from colonial rule into a common front. In short, it behaved as Johnnie Campbell anticipated in 1949.

China and the USSR fell out in the early 1960s, codifying their differences in a series of ideological polemics that now have an archaic quality, if still replete with points of interest. For all the fulminations against the USSR, however, the leadership of the CPC surely did not anticipate its collapse in the form it took, and this was a circumstance which could not be ignored – the enhanced opening to market forces and deeper integration with the capitalist world economy initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1992 followed directly on the end of Soviet power.

That event forced adjustments on every player on the world stage, ushering in as it did the "unipolar moment" when all issues apparently lay within the grasp of the USA for its de-

## Friendship has a history

**JENNY CLEGG surveys the more than century-long history of attempts to build people-to-people friendship between Britain and China both in the labour movement and more broadly**

**CHINA FRIENDSHIP ORGANISATIONS** have a history of some one hundred years in Britain, each with their own characteristics, but joined by a common thread of opposition to British government interventionism and hostile policies. These associations often worked with others – trade unions, peace organisations, women's groups, cooperative societies, Chinese community associations, science and arts bodies and so on – supplying speakers and coordinating activities. At critical moments, these people's organisations were capable of rousing widespread and broad support.

Their origins can be traced to the opposition to the first Opium War, with the Chartists presciently predicting the ultimate success of the Chinese people against imperialism. This hope was later to inspire a young British naval officer, Augustus Lindley, who resigned his commission to fight on the side of the Taiping peasant rebels. In 1863, aged only 20, Lindley engaged in the audacious capture of the gunship 'Firefly', the pride of Britain's Yangtze fleet, which he handed to the Taiping leaders. Lindley's two-volume History of the Taiping Rebellion served as an important link in the thread of British anti-imperialism.

### The Hands-off China Campaign, 1925-1927

The Hands-off China campaign opposed Britain's suppression of China's rising nationalist movement and was to become the largest international solidarity campaign at the time of the General Strike.

Concern over cheap Chinese labour had seen the formation of the British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom, sponsored by the London Trades Council and chaired by George Hicks, also chair of the TUC General Council. Seeing a strong Chinese people's government as the only chance for a Chinese trade union movement to improve labour conditions, trade union

activists joined anti-imperialist campaigners to condemn the killings of unarmed Chinese demonstrators by British forces.

Whilst Labour and trade union leaders united in a call for 'Peace with China', they however fell short of demanding troop withdrawals. But the grassroots were clearly anti-imperialist: over 80 Hands-off China committees around the country called for recognition of China's national independence; the end of unequal treaties; the withdrawal of armed forces; and closer cooperation between the British and Chinese trade union and labour movements.

### League Against Imperialism, the Friends of the Chinese People, 1927-1937

After 1927, the British section of the League Against Imperialism (LAI), chaired by Fenner Brockway (first elected as a Labour MP in 1929 and later a member of the House of Lords), continued to oppose Britain's ongoing military presence in China as well as the supply of arms to Chiang Kai-shek and the policy of Anglo-Japanese co-operation. Demonstrations were organised to try to stop ships loaded with munitions for Japan from leaving British docks.

Later, the LAI British section set up the Friends of the Chinese People. Throughout 1934 and 1935 its China News was the

only regular source of information in Britain about China's Red bases, the Eighth Route Army and the Long March.

### China Campaign Committee (CCC), 1937-1949

The CCC was a broad committee mobilising support among British people in aid of China following Japan's full-scale invasion in 1937. It drew together politicians, local councillors, church leaders and ministers, trade councils and trade unions, cooperative societies and peace organisations in calling for relief to China and a boycott of Japanese goods.

By 1940 the CCC had organised nearly 3,000 events throughout the country and had distributed one million leaflets. Its strength was shown in its success in preventing the loading of ships with materials for munitions to Japan and in its boycott of Japanese goods, which finally won government agreement in 1939 on legislation requiring a country of origin stamp on goods.

Funds raised by the CCC went to the China Defence League in Hong Kong for International Peace Hospitals in the liberated areas (the organisation was led by Song Qingling, the widow of Sun Yat Sen, the "father of modern China"). In 1942, the Committee sponsored an Anglo-Chinese

termination. That "moment" should be remembered above all as a time of endless wars of intervention. Part of the global significance of the People's Republic is that it took part in none of them and always sought peaceful dialogue in preference.

Unipolarity is now passing. Already weakened by US military defeats in Iraq and Afghanistan and the disastrous consequences of 'Washington Consensus' economics, leading to the banking collapse of 2008, it now faces a systemic negation. That is due not only to the decline of the USA, now reflected in its intractable internal political turmoil, but also to the peaceful rise of China.

The alternative world order promoted by the Chinese government offers cooperation and development for all and eschews militarism and interference. It prioritises adherence to international law and peaceful resolution of disputes. This is not the world order of imperialism - pressure, threats, looting and diktat.

We should not try to squeeze the experience of Chinese socialism into the straitjacket of European experience. Although the CPC was founded as a consequence of the October Revolution and under the guidance of the Communist International, that was the start, and not the end of the story. Attempting to mechanically reproduce experience elsewhere proved not to work. Basing strategy on the realities of the Chinese people's rich history of elemental struggle, from the Taiping Rebellion to the Boxer Uprising, the 1911 revolution which overthrew the Qing dynasty, and the May 4th movement did, uniting peasant discontent with national aspirations within a global proletarian movement.

The CPC has since championed the 'sinification of Marxism', an idea which bears two meanings. The first is that it consists of the application of Marxism as a given set of principles to the particular social conditions of China. Mao

Zedong and his comrades set about this work - they placed the peasantry at the centre of communist politics as a revolutionary subject and developed the concept of 'New Democracy' among other innovations. These are of enduring importance.

The second meaning posits the transformation of Marxism itself through the experience and reflection of the Chinese people (more than one-fifth of humanity), Chinese traditions and the Chinese revolution. In this understanding, China takes Marxism from the European labour movement and returns it to the world enriched, developed and nearer to universalisation, but not, of course, 'finished', something which would be entirely impossible.

It introduces novel philosophical elements into Marxism, supplementing Hegel's method with ideas from the Confucian and other Chinese canons. Some of this sounds quite alien to western class-struggle socialism, but demystified it is not necessarily at odds. For example, the CPC champions "common prosperity" and a "harmonious society." An ordinary person in Britain may easily identify those as features of a socialist society, and certainly they are not attributes of contemporary Britain or the USA at all.

Since the present system in China does not correspond to past models of socialism, some deny its socialist character tout court. It is, of course, somewhat arrogant to dismiss the views of the Chinese state and ruling party altogether.

Development Society to channel support from the British cooperative movement for the Gung Ho industrial coops which operated in both Kuomintang (KMT) and Communist-controlled areas.

In 1942, when the British wartime coalition government officially set up the British United Aid to China, local CCC groups joined in with their fund-raising activities. However, the BUAC council, supposedly neutral, preferred to supply the KMT whilst avoiding sending relief to the liberated areas.

### Britain-China Friendship Association (BCFA), 1949-1960s

Through the 1950s, the BCFA was the main source of public information about the newly-established People's Republic, its internal developments and external stands. The association drew together three key constituencies keen on links with China: the coop movement, people in scientific and cultural fields, and the trade unions.

Individual membership reached over 2,000 at its peak, with some 80 supporting organisations and an affiliated membership of around 400,000. Influential figures such as Joseph Needham and Joan Robinson placed the association at the forefront of cultural and academic exchange with China.

The BCFA consistently criticised British complicity in US policies of support for Chiang Kai-shek and Taiwan, the exclusion of China from the UN, and the Korean War. Public reaction against British involvement in war with China in 1951, and again in the Taiwan Straits crises of 1955 and 1958, gave impetus to the British peace movement, and the BCFA was to play an influential role in supplying information and speakers with first-hand knowledge for local groups.

The China trade embargo was a further issue of public concern. Britain's commercial interests in China in 1949 were far greater than that of any other Western country and the US-instigated policy was widely seen as costing British workers' jobs. The legendary efforts of the 'Icebreaker' British businessmen and their 48 Group, who were also active in the BCFA, won support amongst trade unionists, who saw trade with China, not arms manufacture, as a way out of Britain's economic difficulties.

### Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU), 1965-present

Formed at a time of confusion amongst the British left after the Sino-Soviet split, SACU adhered to the view that friendship with China could only really be based on

understanding. Not precluding sympathetic and constructive criticism, SACU set out to tackle misconceptions by 'showing China as she really is'.

SACU's launch had the support of over 200 distinguished persons in the arts, sciences, public life and academia. Within months, however, Sino-British relations began to seriously deteriorate. The British Hong Kong authorities' suppression of the mass protests against the territory's use as a US base in the Vietnam war was followed by the burning of Britain's Beijing Embassy. Many eminent sponsors fell away as SACU firmed up its stance to oppose hostile policies and campaign vigorously against the 'yellow peril' scare misrepresenting China as the new world menace.

SACU grew as the Cultural Revolution and China's stance on the Vietnam War stimulated new interest. Once full Sino-British diplomatic relations were established in 1972, SACU continued its valued role providing informed discussion about China's world view and experiments in social change. This fed into debates in the women's movement, black and anti-racist groups, the shop stewards' industrial democracy movement, as well as the arts and medicine.

In 1981, SACU helped initiate the twinning of Birmingham and Changchun and, as contacts between China and Britain expanded, so did the organisation with its

The alternative world order promoted by the Chinese government offers cooperation and development for all and eschews militarism and interference. It prioritises adherence to international law and peaceful resolution of disputes. This is not the world order of imperialism - pressure, threats, looting and diktat.

However, there are points which cannot be overlooked – the dizzying levels of income inequality, the persistence of unemployment and the intrusion of market relationships into basic public services (all unknown in Mao's time) – and which must raise questions.

Yet the CPC leadership insists that moving a huge and originally very poor country into a fully socialist society is the work of many generations. And the complete elimination of absolute poverty, a recent achievement of the CPC, is not just a staggering achievement, it is a socialist one.

The future of socialism in the world depends very heavily on developments in China and on the leadership of its communist party. As Xi Jinping has said, without China socialism risked being pushed entirely to the margins of world affairs after 1991.

After 75 years, the Peoples Republic of China therefore stands at the very heart of an alternative to the world of the Washington Consensus, neoliberal centrism, the militarised "New World Order" and economic

crisis and chaos. The alternative itself is unfinished and perhaps unfinished, but China is holding the door open to possibilities beyond the status quo, to a menu of other options for humanity.

That is most likely the most profound global significance of the PRC on its 75th birthday.

tours and its magazine, China Now. At the time of the traumatic events of 1989, SACU's membership was at its highest ever. It subsequently fell away.

Today SACU, reduced in size, continues with the regular publication of China Eye. Recently the Friends of Socialist China was formed with the more specific aim of promoting understanding of China's socialism and world role.

Today China emphasises the value of people-to-people exchange, especially among young people, more than ever. As it does so, we can see, looking back on this history of people's organisations, their strength in their ability to articulate the common interests of British and Chinese people – in peace, economic relations, cultural exchange and two-way learning. This is still a work in progress.

# Carlos Martinez: China as a force for peace and progress

*“Without peace, nothing is possible. Maintaining peace is our greatest common interest and the most cherished aspiration of people of all countries.” – Xi Jinping*

**THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA** is full of hysteria about China’s “aggression”, “assertiveness” and “expansionism”.

When China reiterates its position on Taiwan - a position which in fact has not meaningfully changed in the last seven decades, and which is entirely consistent with international law - it’s accused of ramping up the threat of war.

When China refuses to go along with the US’s illegal, unilateral sanctions, it’s accused of “subverting the international rules-based order”.

When China invests in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific, it’s accused of imposing debt traps.

## China’s view of international relations

This characterisation varies wildly from China’s view of its own role in the world.

What the Chinese leadership calls for is “building a global community of shared future, with the goal of creating an open, inclusive, clean and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity.”

China consistently expresses its commitment to peace; to global cooperation around humanity’s shared challenges; and to working within the context of the UN Charter and international law in support of peaceful coexistence.

Xi Jinping often talks about China’s orientation towards peace: “Without peace, nothing is possible. Maintaining peace is our greatest common interest and the most cherished aspiration of people of all countries.”

All of this is of course an attractive and compelling vision. But to what extent does it line up with reality? To what extent is China actually working towards peace, development and sustainability? To what extent does China diverge from the model of international relations pursued by the US and its imperialist allies?

## Comparison of China and the US

It’s worthwhile comparing the records of the US and China.

The US is waging a permanent war - a war against multipolarity, a war against sover-

eignty, a war against socialism. A war to protect and expand its domination of the world’s markets, natural resources, land and labour. The Korean War, the Vietnam War, the carpet bombing of Laos and Cambodia, the Iraq War, the Afghanistan War, the regime change wars in Yugoslavia, Libya and Syria. These are all part of the same project of imperialism, of domination, of hegemony.

It’s widely understood by now that the US is the driving force behind the war in Ukraine, which it is using in order to cement its predominance in Europe and to weaken Russia. Equally, the ongoing genocide in Gaza is being supported, defended, financed and armed by the US and its allies, on the basis that Israel lies at the core of the US imperialist project in West Asia.

The US has over 800 overseas military bases, positioned all over the world - including in Britain. With the announcement of the AUK-US trilateral nuclear pact between the US, UK and Australia, and the attempts to revive the ‘Quad’ (the US, Australia, India and Japan), the US is evidently driving towards the establishment of some kind of Asian NATO.

China on the other hasn’t waged war for over four decades. Rather than dropping bombs on the countries of the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and elsewhere, China is helping these countries to build transport, energy, and telecoms infrastructure and to break out of underdevelopment. There is a popular saying in Baghdad that sums up the differences between the US and China: “America bombs, China builds.”

Since the escalation of the war in Ukraine, China has been among the countries pushing for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Since the launch of Israel’s brutal offensive against Gaza, China has been among the countries working towards an immediate ceasefire and for the establishment of a lasting peace. In July this year, China brokered the Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity, in which the 14 main Palestinian factions agreed to achieve “a comprehensive Palestinian national unity that includes all Palestinian factions under the PLO framework, and to commit to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, with the help of Egypt, Algeria, China and Russia”.

China opposes imperialism, because China has suffered under imperialism. China doesn’t

want war and has nothing to gain from war. China’s per capita military spending is around 20 times smaller than that of the US. And although China is also a nuclear power, China has ten times fewer warheads than the US. Importantly, China is the only nuclear weapon state to consistently pledge no first use of nuclear weapons.

These differences between China and the US are not simply a matter of culture, traditions and proclivities, but reflect their social systems. China’s rise is built on a framework of socialism, of public ownership, of people’s democracy, and of meeting the needs of the people rather than being directed exclusively towards increasing the profit margins of big business.

In contrast, the West’s rise is built on a framework of colonialism and imperialism; on the extraction of superprofits from the exploitation of the oppressed countries. This dynamic did not die with the colonial era: the US and its allies continue to wage wars of regime change, to instigate coups and assassinations, to destabilise governments, to impose crippling sanctions, all in the name of supporting a “business-friendly environment” around the world.

In addition to its orientation to peace, China stands at the centre of a process of uniting the countries of the Global South in promoting a multipolar system of international relations. This has a crucial role in the overall struggle against imperialism and indeed towards socialism.

## Global development

China is making an important contribution to global development via the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the Global Development Initiative and other projects.

The BRI is providing the countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific with the opportunity to modernise; to break the chains of underdevelopment. It has become the world’s largest platform for international cooperation, with more than 150 countries and 30 international organisations participating across five continents. A trillion dollars have already been spent or committed on major infrastructure projects. A huge number of roads, railways, bridges, factories and ports have been built, along with energy and telecommunications infrastructure.

## Ecological civilisation

And the BRI is becoming increasingly green. In many cases it’s providing the technology and investment for underdeveloped countries to leapfrog fossil fuel-based development and go directly to solar, wind, hydroelectric and geothermal energy. Erik Solheim, the former UN Environment Programme Executive Director, describes the BRI as the most important global project in history when it comes to green, sustainable development.

Over the last decade, China has emerged as the undisputed global leader in renewable energy, biodiversity protection, forestation and green transport systems.

Its investment in, and deployment of, renewable energy exceeds that of the rest of the world put together. Around 99 percent of the world’s electric buses are made in China. Forest coverage has doubled from 12 percent in 1980 to 24 percent today. China has committed to reaching peak carbon emissions by 2030 (and credible analysis indicates that it’s already reached this goal), and to achieving net zero by 2060. A recent report by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation states that China’s extraordinary progress in solar power and electric vehicles “may have pushed global emissions into decline”.

Its programme of ‘ecological civilisation’ is essentially a Green New Deal on an enormous scale.

## China is our ally

On questions of peace, of development, of protecting the planet, China is on the right side of history. As socialists, as progressives, as anti-war activists, as anti-imperialists, we should consider China to be on our side.

Which of course means that it’s not on the side of our class enemies, of the imperialist ruling classes, which are waging an increasingly vicious New Cold War against it.

Those of us who seek a sustainable future of peace and prosperity, of friendship and cooperation, have a responsibility to oppose this New Cold War, to oppose containment and encirclement, to demand peace, to promote cooperation with China, to promote understanding of China, to build people-to-people links with China, and to make this a significant stream of a powerful mass anti-war movement that our governments can’t ignore.

# What I witnessed in the People’s Republic

**ROGER MCKENZIE** shares his insights from two visits to China this year and says that everyone who can should go and see for themselves

**THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT** that the corporate media has played a massive role in spreading the lies that are told about China.

I think things become a little clearer if we look at this as reporting in the context of a new Cold War and the way that war reporting is written by so-called embedded journalists.

Embedded journalists are essentially those who have been prepared to act as stenographers for nations such as the United States and Britain in the various misadventures they have engaged in on the international stage - such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and now in Israel’s massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank - as well as the people of Lebanon.

At least back in the day during the war in Vietnam there appear to me to have been more independent minded journalists who were prepared to go out and seek the facts rather than relying on what they were told by official sources.

I am not suggesting that finding the truth is always an easy task. Far from it. Wars - even Cold Wars - are complex affairs with what is actually happening open to some level of uncertainty.

During the American Civil War General “Stonewall” Jackson of the slavery-defending Confederate army is said to have turned to an aide during one bloody battle and asked: “Do you ever think what an opportunity a battlefield affords liars?”

This is why I thought it was important for me to visit China and to visit as much of it as possible. I needed the freedom to see and judge for myself.

Before I went, some critics questioned whether I would have the freedom to speak with whomever I wanted and ask them any questions I wanted. I would not have gone on either of my two trips to China this year if I thought I was to be restricted in any way. I wasn’t.

After my last trip, when I spoke about the extent to which the Chinese seemed to genuinely celebrate diversity in the Xinjiang region, including that of the Uyghur community, and explained why this was a

strategically important region for the US to spread its lies and propaganda about, someone rather condescendingly told me that I hadn’t asked the right questions. A remarkable comment because this person had no idea what questions I had asked. They simply disagreed with my conclusions.

My answer to this person is the same as I told others who found my praise for what I saw in China hard to believe and responded to me as a human being. It was fair enough. Rudeness - which I seem to often get - is always ignored.

What I saw for myself was a China very different to the one that I grew up hearing about. I heard of this vast but gut wrenchingly poor nation. I kept seeing news stories of supposed famine and people really struggling to survive.

It was not until much later - when looking back - that I realised the extent to which these stories were being used to paint a picture of the alleged failings of Chinese communism.

I am not stupid enough to think that the US and its buddies would praise the Communist Party of China for playing the decisive role in lifting an astonishing 800 million people out of poverty in their country over a 40-year period. A remarkable figure accounting for around 75 percent of global poverty reduction during that period.

It’s amazing what the certainty of being able to put bread (or noodles) on the table and to keep a roof over your head does for one’s self-confidence.

What I witnessed in the 10 major cities that I visited during my 20 days in China this year was indeed a remarkable self-confidence and a willingness amongst the people to want to continue building their nation.

One thing that I wanted to add to the discussion about the success of the CPC in building a new and vibrant China is around safety - specifically for me as a black person.

What most black people will tell you is that before we apply for jobs, we consider whether there are any other black people at the workplace. It’s not easy being the one to “integrate” (as they used to say) a workplace.

Similarly, before travelling anywhere, we often ask ourselves what the chances are of being racially harassed or, at a much smaller level, just being continually stared at as some sort of curio.

I can honestly say that there was no place in China, whether I was on my own or part of a wider group, where I felt anything other than welcome. I actually felt more comfortable there than just about anywhere else I have ever visited - including many parts of Britain.

There was curiosity and people wanting “selfies” with me, but this was always respectfully done and almost entirely to do with the popularity of my dreadlocks and the often colourful African clothes I wear.

What I saw in China was something that I have seen in other nations in the Global Majority. It was a nation that had decided to chart its own way forward built on respect for others without feeling that it has to interfere in what other nations are doing. China does not feel the need to tell other countries what to do and when.

Despite the constant lies about China, which I outlined in a number of articles after my visits, the CPC is building something new. A political system that is, in my view, clearly Marxist - although some Eurocentric purists disagree - but with Chinese characteristics.

They are continuing to build a society that draws on the deep historical traditions of this very ancient and fascinating country blended with a commitment to being at the cutting edge of technological and environmental advancement.

Importantly, they are prepared to share this advancement with other nations in the Global Majority in win-win exchanges that do not rely on a “might is right” philosophy.

I think we are witnessing something rather special taking place in China and for that we should congratulate the CPC. I am clearly not the only one that can see this. Leaders from across the Global Majority are continually finding their way to Beijing to see how they can work with the Chinese to advance their own societies.

Perhaps more disconcerting than even that for the wannabe “masters of the universe” led by the US is that many of their own also regularly wend their way to China to see what deals can be done.

The self-proclaimed leadership of the US has gone forever, and we are set for a new multilateral world. If you don’t want to take my word for it, my suggestion is one that I heard constantly during my visits: go and see for yourself.

**MICAELA TRACEY-RAMOS**, a young trade unionist and YCL member, looks at some of the lurid slanders that are thrown at People's China, and uncovers their role in manufacturing consent for the US-led New Cold War.

"The British travel bloggers 'sugarcoating' China's Uyghur problem to the delight of Beijing" was a headline published last week in the Telegraph. The article goes on to detail how two travel bloggers went to Xinjiang and reported positively on their experience, noting the contrast between the realities of Xinjiang and the Western media's overwhelmingly negative coverage.

Their upload was not a political vlog, more of a travel piece covering their experiences. Interestingly, the only rebuttal the Telegraph could offer was a vague insinuation that vloggers recording their experience of Xinjiang were ill-informed in relation to the alleged human rights abuses of the Uyghur population, thereby rendering themselves 'complicit' in China's supposed propaganda machine—purely by recording the reality of their experience.

With next to no evidence, these travel bloggers are accused of being part of China's propaganda machine just because they don't toe the Western media's line that presents China as a brutal authoritarian country. The reality, however, is that it's the West which wields a well-oiled propaganda machine, with this article itself being just one of thousands published by the Western media as part of a ferocious propaganda war against China.

**In the context of an ongoing, very real NATO-backed genocide occurring in Gaza, it is hard to take claims of a Uyghur genocide seriously. Given the total absence of evidence pointing to China's guilt, the most basic principle of law mandates that it must be considered innocent.**

The propaganda that is relentlessly pumped out in Britain would have us believe that horrifying crimes are being committed by the Chinese state: committing a genocide of the Uyghur Muslims and employing their forced labour; fomenting rising tensions in the South China sea; exploiting African countries; shutting down democracy in Hong Kong; and, more recently, spying on us in Britain and the West; and much more. These claims fit into what is called 'atrocious propaganda'—a tried and tested form of psychological warfare used against socialist and anti-imperialist states and movements. It typically involves the spreading of slander about putative crimes committed by an enemy (in this case China), featuring very little evidence but an abundance of emotive fabrication and exaggeration. The purpose is to promote a certain narrative about said enemy and manufacture consent for a particular foreign policy agenda, from economic sanctions all the way up to wars of regime change.

All the claims outlined above fall into this category, portraying China as a dystopian, authoritarian regime—in contrast to western countries which are presented as the pinnacle of freedom and democracy. The motive is clear: this elaborate disinformation campaign is a key part of the New Cold War against China.

Xinjiang is one of the core components of this media campaign. The coverage is so pernicious, and has been repeated so many times, that among large sections of society in the West the various slanders about China's "human rights abuses" have been accepted as fact. However, there is no actual evidence to back up the extremely serious claim of genocide—which has been used as a pretext for Western countries to impose sanctions and boycotts on China.

The charge of genocide was popularised in light of a 2021 report by the Newlines Institute for Strategy and Policy (a Washington-based think tank that receives US government financing for its 'research priorities'). This report claims that the Chinese government has implemented a policy

of birth control measures that are selectively applied to the Uyghur population.

There is zero actual evidence to support such claims; what's true is that the birth rate across the whole of China is trending downwards, including in Xinjiang. What is the reason for this? Women are acquiring better access to higher education, are more active in the workforce, and have increasingly reliable access to birth control. Meanwhile, the Western narrative also conveniently ignores a relevant historical fact: all non-Han ethnic groups, including Uyghurs, were exempt from China's one-child policy—hardly the actions of a state determined to exterminate such groups.

If such a genocide were taking place, wouldn't we expect to see Uyghurs fleeing persecution and seeking safety as refugees in another country? There is manifestly no Uyghur refugee crisis, and in 2021 the US had not admitted a single refugee from Xinjiang.

In the context of an ongoing, very real NATO-backed genocide occurring in Gaza, it is hard to take claims of a Uyghur genocide seriously. Given the total absence of evidence pointing to China's guilt, the most basic principle of law mandates that it must be considered innocent.

The easy-to-remember figure of one million is quoted often as a claim of how many Uyghurs are supposedly locked up in internment camps. This claim comes from effectively a single source, amplified by constant repetition. Everything leads back to one researcher: Adrian Zenz. While portrayed as a credible and diligent academic, he is in reality a Christian fundamentalist and professional anti-communist, with disturbingly reactionary and anti-scientific views on all manner of subjects. His 'research' should obviously be subjected to at least generally accepted standards

of academic scrutiny before being cited, but the Western media, the US State Department and others present his claims, which are often anecdotal and unable to stand up to any kind of serious scrutiny, as certified fact.

The propaganda campaign around Xinjiang is part of the US-led Cold War against China, intended to slow—or reverse—China's rise and to maintain US global dominance. Moreover, Xinjiang's location is of geopolitical importance to the US in its bid to destabilise, encircle and contain China.

Britain, ever subordinate to the US in its foreign policy, has enthusiastically joined in with this new cold war. Despite cooperation with China being clearly beneficial for us, the government's 'Integrated Review Refresh 2023' adopted the following definition: "China under the Chinese Communist Party poses an epoch-defining and systemic challenge with implications for almost every area of government policy and the everyday lives of British people."

Britain, in line with Washington, is promoting anti-China propaganda in order to denigrate Chinese socialism and to portray China as an aggressive and disruptive actor in world affairs. This obscures the country's reality: life expectancy is rising; extreme poverty has been eradicated; China has become the world leader in the struggle against climate catastrophe; and is leading the way towards a multipolar system of international relations in which countries cooperate and engage on the basis of mutual respect, in contrast to the subjugation and domination of US imperialism.

The progressive movement in Britain must counter the propaganda war against China with reality and facts. We must refuse to buy into the propaganda which seeks to break the solidarity of those resisting imperialism, and we must refuse to serve a dying global capitalist order which breeds war, death, and destruction.

Books to oppose book worship

**The world of publishing has always been a battlefield of ideological struggle.**

**KENNY COYLE** of Praxis Press looks at some of the challenges in promoting literature that contradicts the standard anti-China and anti-communist narratives.

**NONE OTHER THAN MAO ZEDONG** urged his readers to "oppose book worship" in 1930. This was an intriguing call from a man whose first encounter with Marxism was as a library assistant at Peking University and who is often listed as the most widely read single author in world history.

Just over a decade earlier, the director of Peking University's library, Li Dazhao, initiated the Society for the Study of Marxism, which Mao joined—indeed it was in this context that he read the Communist Manifesto for the first time.

As well as his eventual discovery of the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin in the 1920s and 30s, Mao's writings show a deep knowledge of Chinese classical literature, philosophy and poetry.

"Of course we should study Marxist books, but this study must be integrated with our country's actual conditions. We need books, but we must overcome book worship, which is divorced from the actual situation," he wrote.

This was sound advice, although unfortunately not always taken to heart. According to one study, Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse Tung, better known as the 'Little Red Book', was officially printed from 1964 onward in around one billion copies worldwide (around one copy per four human beings) in almost 40 different languages. Initially promoted for political education in the People's Liberation Army, it remains one of the most iconic titles in global literature.

However, despite Mao's 1930 warnings, the 'Little Red Book', was unavoidably selective and lacking in wider context. Nonetheless it inspired revolutionaries (and would-be revolutionaries) the world over from Sorbonne students to the Black Panthers to the Palestinian resistance.

As part of our broader aim of publishing socialist and anti-imperialist titles, Praxis Press has just launched People's China at 75 – The Flag Stays Red, an anthology of essays to mark the PRC's anniversary. Edited by Keith Bennett and Carlos Martinez, co-editors of Friends of Socialist China,

this is our third China-themed volume.

The first was China's Great Road by John Ross, whose collection of essays provide an astonishing amount of data and statistical analysis chronicling China's economic transformation, not only of itself but of the world.

A second, The East is Still Red by Carlos Martinez, shares the basic argument that China's upward development derives from its socialist orientation.

While all three books attempt to combine Marxist analysis with a focus on the actual national conditions of China, Praxis Press has not set out to impose some narrow 'party line'. Indeed, readers of all three titles side by side will notice small nuances and occasionally more substantial differences of interpretation among authors and contributors, who come from a variety of left-wing traditions and currents or, as the Chinese might say, "schools of thought".

However, the key aim is to widen the debate on China's character and direction beyond the plethora of "China-bad, China-collapsing" titles that populate academic and even activist bookshelves. People's China at 75 is a modest attempt to do that.

Keith and Carlos kick off the anthology with a wide-ranging introduction on "socialism with Chinese characteristics", followed by pieces from US expert and activist Ken Hammond, and a key chapter from Jenny Clegg on the People's Republics early transition period.

In passing, it is worth mentioning that Jenny will shortly be publishing her own Storming the Heavens, analysing the communist revolutionary strategy among the peasantry in China between 1925 and 1949. This is a remarkable book that regrettably Praxis Press let fall from its grasp, so its pick-up from our new partner Manifesto Press is to be warmly welcomed. Jenny's knowledge and interpretation of the original source materials, alongside her obvious sympathy with the struggle of the Chinese communists, promise to make this a seminal work on this critical factor in the CPC's victory.

The Morning Star's very own Andrew Murray offers a typically insightful and witty chapter on the global and historical impact of the Chinese Revolution, and leading Chinese Marxists Cheng Enfu and Chen Jian take the story forward by looking toward the PRC's 2049 centenary.

Roland Boer, an astonishingly prolific interpreter of Chinese political and ideological issues, looks at the important topic of socialist democracy while economist Michael Dunford looks at the question of common prosperity as a basic socialistic goal.

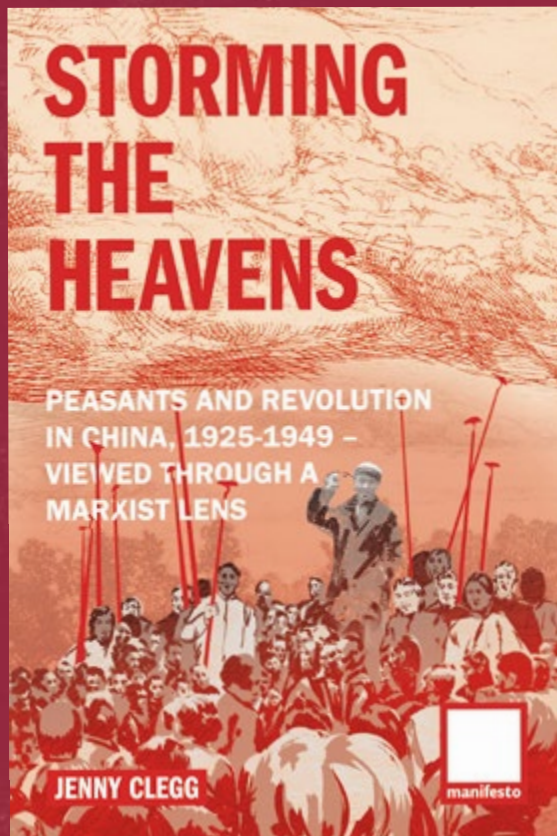
J Sykes has written a stimulating piece on Mao's contribution to Marxism that will certainly provoke much-needed debate, and Efe Can Gürcan contributes impressively-researched work on China's ecological policies which increasingly underpin its development strategy.

Canada-based academic Radhika Desai casts her eye at China's challenge to the Washington Consensus in the field of international finance, and Carlos Martinez concludes the collection with a suitably thought-provoking chapter entitled "How China survived the end of history".

It's worth recalling that in pre-revolutionary China 80 percent of the population was illiterate; 75 years later it is less than two percent. Among other goals, Praxis Press hopes that our publications help explain how this and other remarkable transformations of Chinese society were made possible.

• **Praxis Press** and selected **Manifesto Press** titles, both print and digital editions, can be found at <https://redletterspp.com>

# Essential reading from Manifesto Press and Praxis Press



***Storming The Heavens: Peasants and Revolution in China, 1925-1949 - Viewed Through a Marxist Lens***  
By Jenny Clegg  
Manifesto Press, 2024  
[www.manifestopress.coop](http://www.manifestopress.coop)

'Storming the Heavens is a major accomplishment. It combines detailed historical analysis of China's agrarian social relations, prior to 1949 and beyond, with a keen sense of theory, integrating Western and Chinese sources, Marxist and non-Marxist alike, into a vibrant picture of struggle and transformation. The CPC's programmes and practices are given detailed, and often admiring, attention, while still being carefully dissected with an eye to errors, misjudgments and shortcomings. The complexities of national vs. agrarian movements, relations between poor and middle peasants, navigation of stages in social and political development, differences in class structure between north and south, and much more -- all of this unfolds in a story that is both remarkably specific and deeply universal in its implications. All in all, a fine addition to our knowledge of modern China.'

—David Laibman  
Professor Emeritus, Economics,  
City University of New York  
Editor Emeritus, Science & Society



***The East is Still Red***  
By Carlos Martinez  
Praxis Press, 2023  
[www.redletterspp.com](http://www.redletterspp.com)

China provides a powerful living example of what can be achieved under a socialist system; by a Marxist-led government firmly grounded among the people. The East is Still Red explains the escalating hostility by the imperialist powers towards China and clears up various popular misconceptions.

All available evidence indicates that not only is the Communist Party of China committed to Marxism, but it is a leading force for the development and enhancement of Marxism in the 21st century.

If the first century of human experience of building socialism teaches us anything, it is that the road from capitalism to socialism is a long and complicated one, and that 'actually existing socialism' varies enormously according to time, place and circumstances. China is building a form of socialism that suits its conditions, using the means it has at its disposal, in the extraordinarily challenging circumstances of global imperialist hegemony.

Carlos Martinez provides a concise, deeply researched and well argued account that China's remarkable rise can only be understood by acknowledging its socialist past, present and future.



***Peoples China at 75: The Flag Stays Red***  
Edited by Keith Bennett and Carlos Martinez  
[www.redletterspp.com](http://www.redletterspp.com)

When the People's Republic of China was proclaimed on 1 October 1949, China was one of the poorest and most wretched societies on earth. Illiteracy was as high as life expectancy was low but as Chinese leader Mao Zedong had remarked even before the formal announcement of the creation of the PRC, "The Chinese people have stood up."

Today's China is at the forefront of the world economy, it has eliminated absolute poverty and is leading the world in tackling climate change, and the development of new, high quality productive forces, essentially conforming to the fifth industrial revolution.

China has achieved this unprecedented development in less than a century, yet these achievements are frequently misinterpreted or distorted. People's China at 75 – The Flag Stays Red, organised by the co-editors of Friends of Socialist China, aims to challenge these misconceptions and provide the political, historical and economic context that best explains China's astonishing rise.



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