

SCOTTISH LEFT REVIEW

Issue 137 • Dec 2023-Jan 2024 • £3.00 • scottishleftreview.scot

THE NHS AT 75 • HIGHLAND HEALTHCARE PIONEERS
JURYLESS TRIALS IN TROUBLE • THE CRIME OF ECOCIDE

STEADFAST WITH PALESTINE





Public and
Commercial
Services Union

PCS is horrified at the escalating bloodshed in Gaza, with over 10,000 people killed, including more than 4,000 children.

We are appalled by, and strongly condemn, the massacres of civilians and the taking of hostages in Israel that have been carried out by Hamas forces at a music festival and elsewhere.

The Israeli government's response to the attack by Hamas has included cutting off supplies of food, electricity and fuel from 2.4 million people.

Their homes, schools, hospitals and mosques have been bombed and destroyed. These are heinous acts. This response from the Israeli government is a form of collective punishment which is against international law.

We are appalled at the UK Government's tacit approval for this collective punishment of people in Gaza and call on the UK government to condemn Israel for committing war crimes and to back an immediate ceasefire.

The responsibility of the Israeli government for the overall deterioration of the situation in Gaza and the occupied territories is clear, having openly denied the existence and rights of Palestinians.

We call for all sides, and the international community, to work to end the conflict. We believe that requires a two-state solution and an end to the systematic violence, discrimination and denial of rights that has been inflicted on the Palestinian people.

There will not be peace in the Middle East until there is a political settlement that includes a free and independent Palestine and an end to the occupation.



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CONTENTS

STEADFAST WITH PALESTINE

Editorial

Scotland's Promise to Palestine pg. 3

Jack Murray

Sumud: The Quiet Resistance pg. 4

Derek Durkin

Craigmillar Stands with Gaza pg. 6

Phil Chetwynd

Let the Pictures Tell the Story pg. 9

Cathi Pawson

Harvest Time in Palestine pg. 10

THE NHS AT 75

Wilma Brown

A Diagnosis and Treatment Plan pg. 12

Gerry McCartney

The Sickness of Austerity pg. 14

Rosalind Sanderson

Creativity in a Children's Hospital pg. 15

David Jenkinson

Hard to Feel Hopeful pg. 16

Feergus Murray

Highland Healthcare Before the NHS pg. 18

BOLD PROPOSALS

Anna Murray

Is the Jury Out? pg. 20

Monica Lennon

Polluters Must Pay pg. 22

Charis Scott

The Social Priorities of Humza Yousaf pg. 23

BOOKS AND POEMS

Jack Ferguson

The Borders of Ourselves pg. 24

Enas Magzoub

A Coup that Shook the World pg. 26

Ali Shehzad Zaidi

Dreamer of Tomorrow pg. 27

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The Scottish Left Review is a bi-monthly magazine that provides a place for thought and discussion on the Left.

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Printed by Hampden Advertising
on Hillington Road, Glasgow

SCOTLAND'S PROMISE TO PALESTINE

The Trade Unions in Communities centre in Craigmillar is hosting a photo exhibition called 'We Stand With Gaza'. It includes a photograph of two children, one with an amputated arm, laughing and playing in a street. In *Letter From Gaza* by Ghassan Kanafani, a man narrates visiting his niece in hospital:

I went out into the streets of Gaza, streets filled with blinding sunlight. They told me that Nadia had lost her leg when she threw herself on top of her little brothers and sisters to protect them from the bombs and flames that had fastened their claws into the house. Nadia could have saved herself, she could have run away, rescued her leg. But she didn't.

For every Israeli government description of Palestinians' sub-humanity, there are countless acts of love by Palestinians who chose to stay with their families rather than save themselves. There are countless deeds of doctors who worked to protect lives against the odds, only to be killed or, like the director of Al Shifa hospital, detained by the Israeli army on what was meant to be the first day of truce. There are countless moments of Sumud, the steadfast resoluteness by which Palestine keeps living.

Sumud is often represented by the imagery of pregnancy, symbolising the new life that emerges between a hostile world and a dangerous sky. Edinburgh's communist choir has recently been singing Anias Mitchell's pro-Palestinian Christmas song, "Song of the Magi," which describes the day 'a child is born on the killing floor'. At a rally on Edinburgh's mound, one speaker's words sent ripples through the crowd: they will keep killing, but Palestine is being born in every one of us.

The desire to remain and to return to ruined homes can be confusing for some people in a capitalist culture where individuals value themselves and their wellbeing above all else. Nadia el-Nakla has used her office as a councillor in Dundee and her profile as the spouse of the First Minister to patiently explain why her family went to Gaza despite Israel's regular military interventions during its years-long siege. El-Nakla's mother Elizabeth, while she was trapped in Gaza, used her public status to communicate something of the reality of living under siege. When she returned to Scotland along with her family, Elizabeth El-Nakla said that her heart remained in Gaza.

In the days when it became clear that an Israeli onslaught was coming, the First Minister Humza Yousaf pledged that Scotland would provide refuge to Palestinians. But refuge is not justice, and since making his pledge, during a debate preceding the Scottish Parliament's support for ceasefire, Yousaf accompanied this promise of practical solidarity with the commitment and call to other countries to recognise a Palestinian state. In doing so he has set Scotland apart from many western nations and states, and distanced himself from Britain's rulers, who demonise the Palestinian people.

Yousaf has been the first to express that when it comes to recognising a state, and offering refuge, Scotland's government is quite powerless. But that does not mean that the people here are without power. The streets of Scotland have been flowing every Saturday with people marching for Palestine in numbers unseen since Iraq. When Waverley station filled with the sound of 'From

the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free', placards declared that the slogan is not a hope but a promise. Crowds in Glasgow filling Buchanan Street and George Square chanted 'In Our Thousands, In Our Millions, We Are All Palestinians', and the slogan was a commitment to action. In Dundee, people organised a night of fireworks for Palestine and children gathered on the Fife side of the Tay and watched solidarity light up the city.

Nor is all the action centred in the cities. In mosques, community halls, and trade union offices, many small groups of people have been organising acts of solidarity, such as those described by Derek Durkin. Alongside our feature on the Network of Photographers for Palestine (Phil Chetwynd), the first section of this issue explores some of the forms of solidarity action in, from buying Palestinian produce (Cathi Pawson), and travelling to the West Bank to work with the farmers holding back the settlements (Jack Murray), to offering support to Palestinians who are here in Scotland – just as Scots did fifty years ago for Chileans fleeing Pinochet, as Enas Magzoub recounts in her review of Colin Turbett's *Aye Venceremos!*

The second section of this issue examines how the NHS is faring as its 75th anniversary year closes. Sometimes described as if it is immortal, the NHS more often seems to be an ailing, stiff, and sleepy patient that survives through the skill and patience of its staff. Wilma Brown explains that the reason for this is quite simply a lack of investment and failure of workforce planning. As David Jenkinson discusses in his article, drawing from a career dedicated to child and adolescent mental health, the bare minimum provision is leaving many youngsters without the support they need. Yet through the work of artists like Rosalind Sanderson, hospitals – so often wrought with worry – can become sanctuaries of creativity and joy.

Blueprints for a generously funded health service in Scotland predate the NHS, as Feargus Murray has discovered in the archives of the NHS's highland precursor, the fascinating and under-researched Highlands and Islands Medical Service. Meanwhile, in her critique of the policy ambitions of the government today, Charis Scott doubts the credibility of Humza Yousaf's commitments in his Jimmy Reid lecture to making health, happiness, and community wellbeing his priority. As Gerry McCartney explains, it is austerity that explains our falling life expectancy, and while the NHS is vital, reversing those trends depends on economic intervention far beyond the Scottish Government's intentions.

Elsewhere in this issue, Anna Murray explores Scottish Government plans to pilot juryless trials in rape cases, pitting the rights of those on trial against those of survivors. Monica Lennon explains the mounting pressure to hold polluters accountable with a law of ecocide. And Jack Ferguson, in his review of Naomi Klein's *Doppelganger*, explores how corporate capitalism and conspiracy agendas are penetrating into every part of our politics and our psychologies, in a world of hard-rationed hope.

But as the skies darken, we close with the hopeful glimmering of stars that point the way, described in Ali Shehad Zaidi's study of Munir Niazi, Pakistani poet and dreamer of tomorrow.

A happy advent to our readers.

SUMUD: THE QUIET RESISTANCE

Jack Murray writes about the ongoing oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank and how recent events have seen a rise in Israeli brutality in the Masafer Yatta area.

This article does not aim to shed light on the unspeakable violence that is currently being perpetrated by the Israeli state against Palestinians in Gaza (at the time of writing more than 10,000 Palestinians have been murdered since 7th October). Nor does it aim to situate that violence in the broader arc of colonial violence and dispossession that has been taking place against the Palestinian people since the Zionist project gained a foothold in the early 20th century. Its aim is not to point at the complicity of the imperial powers and the institutions that comprise them in maintaining this genocidal system for their own geopolitical or financial gain, nor to show how this pattern of imperialism has repeated and reproduced itself time and time again at the expense of countless innocent lives, and will continue to do so until it is stopped by an international, democratic people's revolution.

Instead, this article aims to draw attention to a particular region in the West Bank which is currently on the front lines of ethnic cleansing, facing a continuous stream of fascist attacks (both by state and non-state actors) and the dignified and determined resistance of its people, who are committed to defending their lives and their land. I am talking about Masafer Yatta. It is a rural region in the south of the West Bank with twelve villages and around 3,000 inhabitants. In and around these villages is a collection of Israeli settlements and outposts constituting a pivotal part of the ethnic cleansing project. These are communities of Israelis that are built on stolen Palestinian land. They are often populated by particularly violent and aggressive Israelis who carry out attacks. Outposts are settlements that are unrecognised by Israeli law and illegal under international law – but are almost always given legal status, not to mention services (water, electricity) and various forms of financial aid by the Israeli government.

I spent a month living with the communities in Masafer Yatta this August, as an activist with the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). Living with the communities as an internationalist is understood to decrease the chance of open violence for two reasons. Firstly, most imperial states would be impelled to act against Israel if one of their citizens was a direct victim of attacks. Secondly, the media outlets that we have access to mean that we can help to document the crimes of the occupation and in doing so contribute to an international consensus around Israeli violence. This tactic is called protective presence.

The violence carried out in Masafer Yatta is insidious but it remains at a low enough level that it rarely, if ever, makes international news. It tends to take two main forms. The first is 'Legal' by which I mean explicitly state sanctioned. In the early 1980s the government declared the region fit for the establishment of a military Firing Zone on the grounds that the land was 'uninhabited'. This decision has been contested legally since then, but in 2022 it was given a green light by the Israeli high

court. This decision opened the doors to widespread evictions, demolitions (of homes, schools, agricultural buildings, etc.), arbitrary arrests, and the confiscation of vehicles. It is important to note that these processes of state violence would still be happening regardless of the firing zone ploy, but are now able to take place with even greater frequency and force.

The other major strain of violence is 'extra-legal' and it comes from the settlers. The ways in which they terrorise the Palestinians is extremely varied. The following is a short list of some of the things that happened while I was there. Two young settlers attacked an old shepherd while he was out with his sheep – pepper spraying him and his son. A group of about twenty settlers, three of whom were armed with assault rifles, surrounded two farmers who came out one morning to work their land and forced them to leave. A settler on horseback rode into a village and fired his gun in the middle of the night, before pointing his gun at all the terrified villagers and declaring that this was his land. The olive saplings that a shepherd had just planted were uprooted and destroyed. A farmer removing stones from his field so he could plant it up was followed by a group of settlers (armed with clubs) who were throwing the stones back onto the field. There are so many more instances that I could mention, ranging from crop destruction to killing sheep, from cutting down olive trees, to outright murder. Shortly after I left, a cousin of one of the families I was staying with was shot in the stomach.

This is violence that ranges from the banal to the deadly and never lets up. It is constant. The aim, it seems, is to weave fear and pain into every waking moment and make the lives of the Palestinians unbearable. As a result, many families, individuals, and whole communities have left their ancestral land and moved to the cities of Yatta and Hebron. Cleansing the rural areas of their inhabitants and herding them into the Bantustan-esque cities seems to be a pivotal part of the Zionist colonial plan.

But what really struck me when I was there was not the violence of the settlers, the brutality of the army or the injustice of the police, but the quiet resistance of the Palestinians who refuse to be driven off their land. The dignity and determination of these small communities who do not flinch despite staring down the barrel of the most sophisticated and technologically powerful fascist movement in the world today, is honestly breath-taking. The Palestinians call this Sumud. It is often symbolised by the olive tree or the pregnant peasant women. By most accounts, Sumud does not have a good translation in English, with the closest approximations being 'steadfastness' or 'resilience'.

Sumud has different forms, ranging from the static forms of simply staying with your land to the active forms of resistance that involve the creation of organisations and structures



Sheds and a water tower in Khalet al Dabba, a village in Masafer Yatta.

that facilitate economic, political and cultural self-defence. The first intifada is considered the pinnacle of this active form of Sumud. The creation of women's cooperatives, community decision-making councils and mutual aid institutions allowed the Palestinian people to carve out a sphere of autonomy from the Israeli state and pose a serious threat to its hegemony. The power of this uprising was curtailed through a combination of extreme repression and sell-out deals made by the 'leadership'. However, it remains an extraordinary episode of popular revolutionary power that I would encourage all leftists to study and learn from – regardless of context.

But as I said, Sumud is not necessarily grand and spectacular. In Masafa Yatta Sumud is practised every day. It is practised every morning as shepherds take out their flocks whilst armed settlers watch from the hill top. It is practised every night when young community members take shifts to stay up and keep watch over their village. It is practised every day when older youth accompany younger children to school so that they don't get attacked by settlers. It is practised every time a farmer carefully replants his field that has been bulldozed. It is practised every time a family sits down for a meal. It is practised every time a group of friends dances Dabke to celebrate a birthday. It is practised every single time anyone makes the decision to remain with their land and not buckle under weight of global imperial interests. It is Sumud to stay despite international apathy and it is Sumud to stay despite being ignored by their so called 'leadership'. Never has the idea that existence is resistance rung truer for me than in Masafer Yatta.

To be a Samadin (one who practises Sumud) is to defy fascism and defend life. We can learn a lot from the Samadin of Masafer Yatta. We can learn how to take seriously the process of defending our lives and the lives of our communities against those who want to rob us for their own profit. Our enemies

don't carry guns or clubs. They own our homes, they manage and control our work, they cut our benefits, they gentrify our communities, they make decisions which consolidate their own power and claim to represent us. To take real inspiration from the Samadin of Masafer Yatta is to work to understand how much there is to defend in our own lives, and to build our own forms and vehicles of self-defence. It means committing to the construction of democratic people's power in the face of capitalism, fascism, patriarchy and the state.

We must not forget the brave and humble people of Masafer Yatta.

We must not forget the beauty and power of Sumud.

We must continue to defend life wherever we stand.

Long live the intifada!

If you are interested in joining the international solidarity movement to stand by the side of the Palestinian people, please visit the contact section of the International Solidarity Movement which can organise training and provide support for your trip.

CRAIGMILLAR STANDS WITH GAZA

Derek Durkin describes how communities of north Edinburgh are organising in solidarity with Palestine.

The events of 7th October and the rightful international condemnation of the Hamas attacks were followed by a joint campaign by western governments to present those events as the start of the conflict in the Middle East. Of course, political activists and those that keep an eye on international affairs are only too aware that this is a smoke screen that ignores the historical problems dating back more than a century.

Yes, it is right for humanity to condemn the murder of civilians and the kidnapping of innocents. However, the response of our own UK Government and indeed main UK opposition parties have been nothing short of utter hypocrisy. How can you possibly condemn the attacks by Hamas on October 7th and ignore the terrorist attacks carried out by the most powerful military force in the Middle East? How can you say Hamas are guilty of crimes against humanity and at the same time support the targeting of hospitals, schools and refugee camps by the Israeli war machine? How can you demand the release of kidnapped Israelis but ignore the fact that one baby is killed and two others injured every ten minutes in Gaza? How can you give unequivocal support to a regime that denies the very means of life, power, water and food to the Palestinian population? Make no mistake, those in government and opposition who support “the right of Israel to defend itself” in the full knowledge of the brutality being inflicted on innocent Palestinians are as guilty of war crimes as Netanyahu and his terrorist government and should be subject to the full force of the International Criminal Court in future.

Worldwide demonstrations are currently taking place in opposition to the Israeli genocide being carried out in Palestine. From Buenos Aires to Washington, from Kerala to Kuala Lumpur, chants of Free Palestine are being heard across the globe. It is quite clear that, not for the first time, governments are out of touch with the people they supposedly represent.

Western governments led us blindly into the second world war by ignoring the rise of fascism in Europe in the 1930s. Whilst our leaders prevaricated many workers reacted by taking up arms and fighting fascism head-on in the Spanish Civil War. Had they been successful, the second world war would never have happened. We cannot afford a repeat of this today in the Middle East.

There are also similarities with the anti-apartheid campaign in South Africa. Whilst governments turned a blind eye to the racist ac-

tions of that country, the people of the world rose in solidarity. The apartheid regime was overthrown and Nelson Mandela, labelled by Thatcher and many of her cabinet a terrorist, was lauded and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. That victory should give encouragement to those who may feel, as time goes on, that long-distance opposition to the war crimes of Israel is futile.

We, as activists, have a duty to spread Palestinian solidarity among the wider public. We need to convince those who see this as an event happening very far away that does not involve the UK, that nothing could be further from the truth. So, what can we do?

Since the end of last year, we at Trade Unions in Communities have been organising events from our base in Craigmillar for people to come together, eat together, and work together in solidarity with each other and with people across the world. We are reaching people who don't know unions exist. By teaching people about unions and building links across our community, we have found ourselves with many opportunities to spread solidarity with Palestine.

Our doors are open to all, and everyone who comes into our centre in Niddrie sees the latest exhibition by the Network of Photographers for Palestine, ‘We Stand With Gaza’. One display shows a set of incredible photographs capturing the reality of the siege but also the power of people's resilience. Another display demonstrates the diversity and strength of solidarity in Scotland, as well as Chile, Germany, and the USA. Together they demonstrate the power of resistance and solidarity.

Many people in our community have been joining the Edinburgh protests every Saturday, including refugees who live in Craigmillar and Niddrie. We are planning to organise a march one Saturday morning that starts here in our neighbourhoods and makes its way to the Parliament or the Mound to join the central rally. Think how widely and deeply solidarity will spread if there were marches through communities like ours across the whole country converging by foot or by bus with central marches and protests in towns and cities.

At Leonardo, a factory in Edinburgh that makes parts used by Israel, we have been gathering outside the gates at six or seven in the morning to speak with workers. The aim is not to accuse anyone of complicity, but to share information about the demands that Palestinian people are making to end the production in Scotland



Photo credit: Sanad Latifa

of arms supplied to Israel. Imagine if enough trade unionists and others got involved in developing a strategy, gathering support, and building a campaign so that the workers in those factories could make a decision to stop producing those weapons without risking their livelihoods dissolving in a flash.

Another thing that Trade Unions in Communities has been doing is encouraging local union members to bring motions to their branches for discussion and debate. Union branches can and should be places where issues like Palestine are debated so that people who might not be knowledgeable about the details become informed and then engaged. Lots of union branches have already been debating how they can practically support the Palestine solidarity campaign. What is to stop every union branch in the country debating a motion, and resolving to do whatever it can for Palestine? This is not about trade unionists taking their own path or positions apart from the broad campaign for Palestine, but about

us putting their practical support and resources behind the wider movement of solidarity and resistance.

There are many things we can do. But if one thing is certain, we cannot allow this carnage to continue and whilst calls for a ceasefire are welcome they are not enough. Until the siege of Gaza and Israeli control of the Palestinian people are ended there will be no peace.

The photographs featured on this and the next page are from the NPP's latest exhibition, 'We Stand With Gaza'. It is now on view at the Trade Unions in Communities Hub, 121 Niddrie Mains Road, Edinburgh.



Photos credit: unknown (above), Samar Abu Elouf (below)



LET THE PICTURES TELL THE STORY

Phil Chetwynd introduces the Scottish-Palestinian network that created the exhibition 'We Stand With Gaza'.



Above - "Homework in Gaza" (Photo: Ayesha Haroun)
Left - "Harsh Toil" (Photo: Hamde Abu Rachme)

"It might not be easy to change the reality, but at least I was able to convey the people's message and voice."

Shireen Abu Akleh

The denial of the message and voice of the people of Palestine is one of the most ubiquitous phenomena of the modern world. Silence is golden for the military-corporate complex that seeks to dominate the narrative in the Middle East. Those who seek to convey the message and voice of the people are shot dead. This was the tragic fate of Shireen Abu Akleh.

However, Shireen's death was not in vain. Thousands of groups of activists worldwide still keep the story of Palestine alive. One such group is the Network of Photographers for Palestine (NPP), a small group of photographers and activists originally based in Scotland and Palestine, but now with strong roots in Germany and the USA.

NPP was established some 10 years ago by Phil Chetwynd, from Edinburgh, and Rafat Abushaban, from Gaza. The two had got to know each other when Rafat was studying in Scotland. The aim of the Network is to provide a showcase for the very best of Palestinian photography both inside and outside of Palestine. We do this by putting out calls for submissions to all Palestinian photographers both in Palestine and the diaspora. After the closing date, we then ask two professional photographers from the Network to select a suitable number of images for display either in our virtual gallery, or in live exhibitions in venues throughout

the world. We have exhibited in Bethlehem and Birzeit, Cologne, and Copenhagen, Tunis, London, Edinburgh, and all the Scottish major cities. We have tried to influence Scottish lawmakers by exhibiting in the Scottish Parliament, and have taken our exhibitions to remote Scottish villages such as Lochinver and Cromarty, where small pockets of Palestine supporters can be found.

Over the past few years we have developed more international connections in Germany and the United States, and have hosted exhibitions by Ursula Mindermann ('Palestine through German Eyes') and exiled Palestinian Najib Joe Hakim ('Home Away from Home'). We've even published a book of this title, which you can obtain by emailing us on the address below. Our latest collaboration is with femLENS, a group of feminist photographers based in Estonia, who have recently been teaching photography skills to groups of women in East Jerusalem.

Another aspect of our work is to encourage local pro-Palestine groups to use our images to create exhibitions in their own localities. We would provide you with prints from our archive, and advice on how to curate an exhibition in your own community. Finally, we are also happy to provide support and advice and contacts to any photographer who wishes to travel to Palestine.

If you'd like to find out more about our work please get in touch at info@nppalestine.org.

For Najib Joe Hakim's Home Away from Home, email info@socialdocumentary.net.

HARVEST TIME IN PALESTINE

Buying Palestinian is an act of solidarity with farmers living under occupation and oppression, writes **Cathi Pawson**.



Zaytoun is a social enterprise established almost twenty years ago to support Palestinian farming communities through trade, who are facing the challenges of illegal Israeli occupation and settlement. For these communities, farming offers not just a vital livelihood, but is a way to hold on to land that has been passed down through generations. The traditional culture of Palestinian food and farming is emblematic of the wider context of everyday resistance to an occupation that has eroded freedoms, land and livelihoods for decades.

“Our conflict is about our right to stay on our ancestral land and the olive oil is a powerful tool that we use to share our story. It’s a form of non-violent resistance.”

Mohammed Ruzzi, manager of the Palestine Fair Trade Association

We source olive oil, dates, nuts, za’atar and grains from West Bank farmers who live and work under the stifling conditions of a military occupation. Until 2006 we also sourced maftoul, an iconic Palestinian grain, from Gazan farmers. The closure of borders around Gaza since then has made this impossible.

Increasingly, the groves and fields surrounding Palestinian villages have been subject to illegal land grabs by Israeli settlers who are moving into the West Bank. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reports that since 2022 nearly 2,000 Palestinians have been displaced amid settler violence; 43% of these since 7 October 2023.

In this situation, protecting the land is paramount, and cultivation of crops is one way to perpetuate the link between farming families and their land. Israel uses an ancient law dated to Ottoman Empire times, whereby land can be expropriated if it is deemed ‘absentee’ or not officially registered to a Palestinian.

Farming is also important to support food sovereignty for these

communities. West Bank shops and markets are dominated by imported produce, and travel is challenging because of the system of roadblocks and settler-only roads. And at the time of writing, as curfews are imposed across the West Bank and roadblocks are set up outside villages, access to fresh produce close to home is vital.

Harvest season

As we write this, it’s olive harvest time in Palestine. Every year we co-organise trips to Palestine to visit producers, take part in the harvest and support farmers to bring their valuable harvest safely home. This year, all trips have been cancelled as it is not safe to visit, but we continue to keep in touch with producers and friends. A colleague in Palestine told us:

We always know to expect an increase in violence and harassment from settlers and the army at this time of year – just when the crucial harvest of olives is due to take place. But this year that violence is increasing and it is not specific to the olive groves.

We have been hearing directly about attacks around Nablus, and we know many farmers and workers have been prevented from going to their farms. There are more roadblocks and checkpoints springing up everywhere. We heard three people in Kasera village were killed by settlers, and we heard of Marda village being attacked, and then there were air strikes on Jenin. We hear of arrests happening every night and shops being burned down.

You can feel the escalation of violence and tension everywhere. Most recently and disturbingly we have heard that there has been a massive distribution of weapons to settlers across the West Bank – perhaps 20,000 settlers have been armed.

This means the value of the olives to us is correspondingly increasing – the more we are prevented from working and getting an income – the more we depend on the land. It is a time to encourage agriculture more than ever simply so people can be self-sufficient.

In time of war you go back to your land – and your land will be there waiting for you.

For many young people, this is the first time they are experiencing violence and destruction on this scale. They too are therefore learning the importance of the land.

Supporting climate resilience

Farmers in Palestine, like farmers the world over, face increasing challenges as the climate changes. Yields are affected as seasonal patterns shift. Recently, summers have been longer and hotter, yet many farmers cannot put in place additional irrigation to mitigate the damage to crops. The West Bank is divided into three parts, Areas A, B and C. Area C includes 63% of agricultural lands in the West Bank and is under exclusive Israeli civil and security control. Water scarcity is a severe problem in Area C (and problematic in all areas), with Israel controlling 85% of Palestinian water sources. Israel forbids Palestinians to drill new wells or even to build new cisterns to catch rainwater.

The farmers we source from are increasingly turning to regenerative farming practices that boost yields through building soil health and conserving water. The traditional varieties of olive and almond trees they cultivate are rain-fed, meaning they are resilient to drought. Through trade of the produce they grow, the land can remain fertile and green as it has done for centuries.

Supporting livelihoods in Palestine

With unemployment in the West Bank running at 13.1%, and movement and travel restrictions imposed by the occupation making daily commutes arduous, agriculture offers a possible livelihood for many families. This can be an alternative to working in Israeli construction sites, an option that some workers resort to.

“The work isn’t easy, it’s tiring, but it’s joyful at the same time and brings economic benefit for us Palestinians, especially for those keen to find work in the West Bank.”

Doha Asous, farmer and community leader, who is pictured on the previous page.

Buy Palestinian

With lives, land, and livelihoods at stake now more than ever, buying Palestinian is important. It is a way not only to financially support communities living under a restrictive occupation, but it also offers a way to show solidarity with a people threatened by increasing violence and dispossession.

We continue to stand by, and with, the Palestinian people and the land they have cultivated for centuries. We celebrate their food and farming culture, which remains vibrant even as they navigate the many obstacles to daily life imposed by the occupation.

We keep our customers and supporters up to date with news as it affects the communities we support in Palestine, via our newsletter and social media. That’s our way of sending a message in a bottle.



WRITE TO US

We want the magazine to be a place of discussion, debate, and dissent. If you have any reactions, reflections or perspectives on what you are reading, send a letter to the editor:

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WRITE WITH US

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KEEP US WRITING

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Without better workforce planning and expanded funding the prognosis for our NHS is dire, writes **Wilma Brown**.

The NHS is our most, quite possibly only, revered public institution. No other comes remotely close, and the golden nugget in there is the unwavering commitment of staff to deliver the very best care.

During the pandemic you will remember one reason for doing the decent thing of avoiding contact with others was “to protect the NHS”. It says a great deal about the status of the NHS that this was felt to be a useful slogan, given the role of the NHS to protect us. By way of comparison how successful would a lockdown predicated on “Stay home to help out Holyrood” have been?

This should not, though, be a cause for complacency – there is a well known phrase attributed to Bevan about folk having the faith to fight for the NHS. We are beginning to see more private interest and back door privatisation in the NHS which means we should at least be on our guard and be ready to fight for our NHS.

2022 saw a 73% increase in the number of people paying for surgery or intervention in the private sector. The vast bulk of these patients appear to be people using their savings or borrowing to seek a private medical intervention. These ‘self pay’ patients are in addition to those who are using private healthcare schemes through work, insurance or mutual policies, all to avoid languishing in pain in the ever-growing NHS queues.

In 2021-22 there was a 41% increase in the number of patient complaints with all indicators suggesting that the number will increase further from 35,172 to a figure much nearer 40,000. The majority of complaints appear to be related to waiting lists, although there are indications that complaints regarding how staff communicate with members of the public are also on the increase. That these two things could be related is a thought that crosses the mind of most people who examine the figures. Of course, we fail to count the millions of ‘thank yous’ that come in daily across NHS Scotland.

Staff of course can't impact directly on waiting lists, but it seems that when it comes to explaining inadequacies, citing 'COVID' is less of the get-out-of-jail-free card than it was.

There is a tendency to downplay such figures because Scotland's numbers are better than NHS England's. This, though, is never an appropriate or acceptable defence. Even leaving aside that there are some indicators where Scotland isn't better (generally around very long waits) it doesn't cut much ice with patients. It doesn't make the pain any less, or allow patients to go about their normal lives and accept the excuse.

There are challenges in Scotland's NHS – most of them unrelated to the pandemic. This doesn't mean that we accede to those who argue that the NHS is unsustainable. That argument is made with tedious regularity by Tories and market-loving think tanks. "Choice is difficult" is the mantra-like chant of those arguing we should choose a smaller NHS or one with more private involvement. They seldom spell out whose lives will become more difficult as a result of those choices.

The difficulties facing the NHS are less to do with structure and more to do with underfunding and inadequate workforce planning. Funding is starved on a day to day level, and the NHS also lacks the investment capacity to properly adapt and plan for the future. The debate we need is far more about resourcing and planning than structure, but neither should we set our faces against development and change, which is the only way forward.

There is no reason why our NHS should not continue to be both loved and free at the point of use 75 years from now. This will take big political decisions and long-term investment to underpin the modernisation programme, developed by those in the NHS and not by politicians, which Scots deserve.

The Scottish Government's commitment to safe staffing in our NHS (due to be implemented in 2024) arguably suggests a commitment in Scotland that others could learn from. However,

there is a growing degree of scepticism amongst NHS unions and workers. We have closely observed the lack of teeth this process has had in Wales, in making any difference in these dire times. The process outlined by the Health and Care Staffing (Scotland) Act is long on report writing but short on practical remedies. Staff are fearful that Health Boards and Scottish Government will simply continue to ignore staff concerns, press on with their current 'nothing to see' approach, and make the same old excuses.

The Scottish Government have, rightly, held themselves up as leaders in industrial relations, with not a day lost to strike action amongst NHS Scotland Agenda for Change workforce. That result was hard won. UNISON expects the Scottish Government to hold its end of the bargain and lead a reform process which improves workers' pay, terms and conditions. This won't solve the recruitment and retention crisis in our NHS by itself, but it is an essential step without which few other measures will have much relevance.

This is the real modernisation agenda in the NHS, but it is set against a backdrop of potential cuts to public service funding. We have NHS Boards unable to achieve financial break even in 2023, fuelling an alternative agenda for the future where Chief Executives and NHS leaders are actively lobbying to close beds and reduce services.

That is a prospect which we must contest, and we must do so by arguing for more resources for health. Resources must be raised not from raiding the budgets of other vital public services but from expanding the Scottish Government's budget as a whole by using the powers Holyrood has to tax wealth. That is the ground the NHS faithful need to fight on.

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THE SICKNESS OF AUSTERITY

Gerry McCartney explores why health improved in the past and isn't improving now.

For the sixty-five years following the creation of the NHS, life expectancy in Scotland consistently improved. However, since around 2012, average life expectancy stopped improving, and life expectancy in the poorest 30-40% of areas actually started to decline. In this article, I describe what was behind the remarkable improvement in health, and why this has gone into reverse now for so many.

Life expectancy only consistently increased since the 1860s (before that it had fluctuated at around forty years depending on the frequency of disease outbreaks, wars and famine). Improved sanitation, housing, nutrition and broader economic development were important between 1860 and 1920. After this, housing improvements remained important, but so was the building of the welfare state and pension entitlements, the creation of new public services and institutions, wealth and income redistribution facilitated by public ownership and greater trade union power, improved gender equity in some domains, and continued economic development. The creation of the NHS to make healthcare free at the point of need and accessible to all was an important part of this, not least by increasing the uptake of low cost and effective treatments such as vaccination. Between 1945 and 1975, the widespread improvement and narrowing inequalities was reflected across many countries, and is referred to by Thomas Piketty and others as *Les Trente Glorieuses*.

After 1980 many of these positive trends reversed. Income and wealth inequalities rapidly increased, public assets were privatised, public services were under-funded, trade unions were fought, and many Scottish health trends started to falter. Drug- and alcohol-related deaths rapidly increased, and inequalities in health worsened, such that by the 2000s these were wider than the rest of Western and Central Europe. Although these health trends were dreadful, and clearly related to the political and economic changes introduced during the 1980s, average life expectancy did continue to increase.

Between 2012 and 2019, Scotland, the rest of the UK, the USA and other countries such as Germany, experienced life expectancy trends that were almost unprecedented and terrifying. Average life expectancy stopped improving, and started declining in the poorest areas, long before the pandemic hit. Only in times of war or pandemic has this been previously seen.

The causes of this are now clear. Austerity policies implemented across countries in the wake of the 2007 financial crisis ripped vital threads of already frayed public services and social security systems. Across the UK this has led to cuts across services, but most markedly in local government. Social security has also been a target, both in terms of the real terms value of benefits and through increased conditionality for recipients. Precarious and low paid work has also become much more common.

As if things couldn't get any worse, the pandemic then hit, reducing life expectancy overall, and exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. The pandemic damaged health in three ways. The direct impact of the virus impacted most on the elderly, people with pre-existing health conditions (disproportionately in poorer groups), and amongst people who were the 'essential' (but often lowest paid) workers who were more likely to be exposed. Second, healthcare provision was disrupted, leading to many people not receiving the care that they would have benefited from. For example, cancer diagnoses dropped by about a third in the first year of the pandemic, meaning more late diagnoses and worse outcomes. Third, the wide-

spread disruption to people's lives, though disruption to work, education, social support and incomes, created immediate and long-term damage to people's lives and health.

As we emerged from the early waves of the pandemic, inflation increased, but wages and benefits lagged behind. Real-terms incomes have fallen, particularly for the poorest groups for whom inflation is higher. We estimate that this has increased premature mortality by 6%, further compounding the negative impacts of 1980s neoliberalism, austerity and the pandemic.

What all this shows is that the health of the population is determined much more by the economic and social policies of government than the operation of the NHS. Damaging policies make the population sicker, and create more demands on the NHS and social care, which can only go so far in addressing the unprecedented healthcare needs of the population. Forty years of neoliberal policies, compounded by austerity, the pandemic, and now the 'costs of living crisis', have given us a population with extensive and complex health problems. The postponement of routine healthcare during the pandemic, alongside the well-meaning actions of so many to 'not bother their GP' during that busy time, have created a massive backlog of ill-health, diagnostic tests, outpatient appointments and operations.

Fifteen years ago reports were written which called for urgent action to reduce the levels of ill-health in the population so that healthcare needs would not increase as the population got older. The economic and social policies that might have delivered improved population health didn't materialise, and instead we got austerity which made that situation worse. If we are to bring the need for healthcare in the population down and bring the rate of mortality down (or at least stop them rising), we need more equitable economic and social policies urgently. We need the NHS more than ever, but we can't expect the NHS to fix the current health trends.

For more details on the evidence discussed, see:

McCartney G, Walsh D, Fenton L, Devine R. 'Resetting the course for population health: evidence and recommendations to address stalled mortality improvements in Scotland and the rest of the UK.' Glasgow, Glasgow Centre for Population Health & University of Glasgow, 2022.

Walsh D, McCartney G, Collins C, Taulbut M, Batty GD. 'History, politics and vulnerability: explaining excess mortality in Scotland and Glasgow.' Glasgow, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, 2016.

Richardson E, McCartney G, Taulbut M, Douglas M, Craig N. 'Population mortality impacts of the rising cost of living in Scotland: scenario modelling study.' *BMJ Public Health* 2023.

CREATIVITY IN A CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Art and play in paediatric healthcare brings magic and wonder to worrying places, writes **Rosalind Sanderson**.

There are challenges to working in a hospital, but persuading people of the value of creativity for children's wellbeing is not one of them. Creativity and play can relieve anxieties, connect people to their interests and provide shared experiences which can support people to have fun and enjoy themselves despite going through what can be traumatic experiences.

I trained and worked as an artist before moving into arts in healthcare, which has been a fascinating learning curve. I have the wonderful job of coordinating and overseeing a participatory arts programme of artists who work bedside on hospital wards and in community health settings. My job is interesting and varied, and quite far ranging in scope. I am encouraged to be creative in how I work and have been able to put my own stamp on the programmes I oversee – always with an eye to producing engaging and child-led experiences. Amongst other experiences, through my job I have brought touring theatre, festivals, and orchestras into the hospital, supported flash mob silent discos on wards, instigated a hospital-wide Glow Festival and danced on stage in front of 800 people with a group of children at my work's annual Christmas concert. My job is, at its heart, about using creativity to transform moments and to connect, bring joy, inspire and empower people – which is profoundly important always, but perhaps particularly so within hospitals which can be difficult and worrying places for anyone to spend time.

Over the past three and a half years working in hospitals, I have been fascinated to learn about the creative and playful approaches healthcare professionals use when engaging children in treatment, from the physiotherapist who uses bubbles and treasure trails to incentivise children to move and to do their exercise, to the play specialists who use special dolls to help relieve children's anxieties about procedures. I observed how an occupational therapist used drawing and doodling to measure and strengthen a child's hand grip, and how painted hand-prints are used to support memory making for children who are on palliative care. Play is a really important part of how children express themselves and understand the world, which is why creative engagement techniques are so widespread in a children's hospital, and why bringing artists into paediatric healthcare settings makes so much sense.

Despite having a very different background and training from my NHS colleagues, we share the common goal when using creative approaches to make a positive impact on healthcare experiences. From magic to storytelling to visual arts and pantomime, arts can provide welcome distraction and enrich the time we have. Hospitals can be places to experience fun, wonder and culture too. It is encouraging to feel part of a movement of arts in health programmes, pushing the boundaries of what's possible with the aim of creating special and magical experiences that can change people's view and experience of hospital for the better.

Pictured here is my art box, which has become a collaborative artwork in itself. When I use it to lead arts sessions at the hospital I invite children to contribute drawings to it. It has become a roaming and constantly changing artwork that represents, to me, the most important function art and creativity can perform, which is to create moments of real connection, to ideas and to each other.



Art box, by Rosalind Sanderson

HARD TO FEEL HOPEFUL

CAMHS services are on a downward curve and new ‘throughput’ policies will make life harder still for young people in difficulty, writes **David Jenkinson**.

Getting referred to a child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) has never been fun. It means something drastic is happening at an already difficult time. Not only is it hard for the young person themselves, but it is also hard for that person’s family, for their peers, and for the other professionals who have a responsibility to them. Mental health problems in young people are often hard to understand. It is often hard to be helpful, and it is sometimes impossible to keep hope alive.

NHS Scotland has been providing specialist services for children and young people’s mental health since about the mid-1980s. It started when a few chaotically organised Child Psychiatry Clinics came into being (in Scotland, at least) because of the enthusiasm and passion of various Consultant Psychiatrists and their colleagues, not because they were commissioned. They grew in Edinburgh, Glasgow and in Aberdeen and Dundee some time after. A team would be a consultant and a few keen social workers. Nurses came later, psychology even later than that.

The idea of ‘commissioning’ a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) came later still. In Scotland, some health boards still haven’t really commissioned their CAMHS provision, and instead have just configured what they already have. Funding has always, always been an issue. There have only been a few short periods in my time in CAMHS teams where we felt as though we were managing well. I often heard politicians talking about increased spending in CAMHS, but I can tell you that at times it was hard to believe that any new money was coming our way. Sometimes the funding was for fixed-term projects that helped, a little bit, but just for the fixed term. In any event, for every £10 NHS Scotland currently spends, less than 10p is spent on child and adolescent mental health. The bottom line is that whenever we look, we see unmet demand. We’ve known for a very long time that the incidence of mental health problems in the population under 18 that require some kind of intervention to resolve has been about one in ten. Recent evidence suggests that the ratio had increased to one in six. That means an average sized classroom might have five or six desperately unwell individuals in it. Our colleagues in social work, starved of funds themselves (because the spending bias has been slightly towards health since prior to the credit crunch in 2008) have effectively closed their doors to young people who have a ‘mental health’ component to their difficulties. The idea of joint, multi-agency working seems a long way off for most CAMHS clinicians. Our colleagues in education and in the police are increasingly becoming front line mental health workers themselves. It is hard to feel hopeful for the future.

With the CAMHS systems already stressed, it is clear that something is happening to young people’s mental health. The impact of the pandemic is still to be fully realised but we know that in recent years, the number of young people looking for help has skyrocketed. There has been an increase of 80% in eating disorder presentations. We know that there is no mental health presentation with a higher mortality, and that so far, no matter what we do, we can expect that 1 in 10 of children diagnosed with an eating disorder before they are 16 will ultimately succumb to the consequences of prolonged starvation, or will take their own lives. So the fact that there are now many more individuals with eating disorders is grim news.

We know that poverty makes you ill – so young people living

in desperately poor circumstances brought about by austerity won’t live as long, and will be unwell in one way or another for a greater part of their lives. The same is true of trauma. We know that trauma damages the developing brain, and we know that good therapy can help people rebuild their lives. Without good therapy, the ‘adverse childhood experiences’ leave many people carrying the awful traumas of childhood into uncertain, but invariably unhealthy futures.

Most CAMHS managers know that you can’t beat the curve. Making mental health services available to the extent they are needed will cost a lot of money. But as long as CAMHS, with a clinical responsibility for the mental health of the population under 18 (about 20% on average), is only getting 5% of the budget, we can’t possibly catch up.

Instead, managers want to increase the ‘throughput’ so that more people are seen. For a long time, those working in CAMHS teams operated on the principle established by the Royal College of Psychiatry in the early 2000s that the maximum safe number of ‘new’ young people to be seen in a year was about 40, about one per week. This took into account the fact that young people often need several appointments to ‘warm up’ to therapy, and that their presentations were often much more complex and difficult to grasp when compared to work with adults. But somehow, that ‘maximum’ became a ‘minimum’. We dropped the principles of multi-disciplinary, then joint, assessments not because the evidence told us that such things weren’t necessary, but because getting a lone practitioner to assess a young person newly presenting to CAMHS was cheaper. We made it harder for young people to get an appointment, putting in screening processes that, subtly or otherwise, told our young clients that they weren’t yet sick enough. Even if you eventually do get an appointment (about half of all referrals to CAMHS are rejected), CAMHS managers are placing worried and exhausted practitioners under pressure to discharge young people after six sessions or so, just aiming for them to be ‘well enough’ to allow us to forget about them for a while. They are being forced to ration something that is already rationed. And it’s the young people, their families, and those trying to help them, that pay.

But something has kept me in CAMHS, and in the NHS throughout a lengthy career. It’s mostly the people. Despite the many challenges, I’m constantly amazed to be working with people who consistently strive to do a better job tomorrow than the one they did yesterday. We are getting better at thinking about how we can look after those charged with the huge task of keeping vulnerable and challenging young people safe and well. My own health board seems to be particularly committed to this. I’m also amazed by the resilience, strength and humour the young people themselves show time and time again. They have been beaten up by life, but they get back up. It is humbling to be with them, and nothing beats the joy when a young person is discharged from your care to a hopeful future. We just want to be able to do that more often.



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HIGHLAND HEALTHCARE BEFORE THE NHS

On the 110th anniversary of the Highlands and Islands Medical Service, **Feergus Murray** explores its history and legacy.

The Highlands and Islands Medical Service (HIMS), regarded as a precursor to the NHS, marks its 110th anniversary this year. It is part of the long, exceptional history of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. Its most basic founding followed the 1912 Dewar Report, but the story of HIMS stretches further back into the 19th century and to the legacy of the clearances and the fight for crofters' rights in the 1880s. In the process of the clearances, the people of the rural Highlands and Islands had been scattered away from the more arable inner straths into bare subsistence crofting communities and a few increasingly overcrowded townships. The squalor, overcrowding and subsistence living conditions had a disastrous impact on health outcomes. In the aftermath of the Highland Potato Famine of 1846, the new poor laws moved the responsibility of medical care for the poor and paupers onto new Parochial Boards under the Board of Supervision. Finally, in 1850, the first attempt was undertaken to ascertain properly the levels of medical provision available in the Highlands and Islands.

A survey was undertaken by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE) and led by Dr John Coldstream. Initially, when Dr Coldstream started his inquiries, the College asked the Board of Supervision "for such information as it happened to be possessed of, regarding the supply of medical men practising in the region"; the Board told them that the information did not exist. The RCPE surveyed the ministers and some other residents of 170 parishes and concluded that the entire Highlands and Islands and its population of over 370,000 people were covered by only 133 medical personnel. Despite this alarming statistic, no recommendations were made. People in the Highlands and Islands were left at the mercy of a disinterested Board of Supervision or at the whims and benevolence of their landlords. Some were generous, such as Kenneth Macleod of Greshornish on Skye, who set up the Gesto Hospital in 1878 as a free hospital for the inhabitants of Skye. Later, in light of the land struggle of the 1870s and 1880s, the Napier Report looked into the conditions of crofters in the Highlands and Islands. The resulting Crofting Act did much to alleviate the conditions of crofters. It represented a significant win over the landed interest, but as it did not include medical care, it did little to alleviate the distinct lack of medical coverage.

The first major attempt to provide medical coverage for the

poor of Britain came with the Liberal government's passing of the National Insurance Act of 1911. The act aimed to provide some relief for the waged working poor and the unemployed in a select number of industries in times of sickness. The act's provisions covered upwards of 70% of Britain's workforce at the time. However, this did not extend to the Highlands and Islands crofting communities. As wage labour comprised very little of a crofter's income - nor could they be counted among the unemployed - the National Insurance Act inadvertently excluded much of the crofting community from the new rights to healthcare coverage and sickness benefits. Surveys in 1904 and 1909 insisted that the need for medical provision in the Highlands and Islands was distinct and different from the rest of Britain. Still, given the failure of the National Insurance Act, the government was keen not to antagonise the Highlanders in case of unrest similar to that of the land struggle of the 1880s. In 1912, to circumvent this, Lloyd George set up the Dewar Committee with Sir John Dewar, MP for Inverness, at its head.

The committee was established to "consider at an early date how far the provision of medical attendance in districts situated in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland is inadequate, and to advise as to the best method of securing a satisfactory medical service therein". To fulfil this objective, the committee interviewed doctors and other interested parties across the Highlands and Islands. These interviews helped demonstrate healthcare's dire state in the region. One such voice from the report was that of Mr Graham, a fisherman from Rona; he reported on doctors' difficulties in travelling to their patients.

It is just the Portree Doctor we have, and he must come in a boat, and in the winter-time he cannot come. We may possibly have to wait a fortnight for him, and the patient will be suffering pain all the time. It is quite possible that the patient may die without seeing a Doctor at all.

Another interviewee, Dr MacDonald from Badenoch, had to travel twenty miles to reach some of his patients, only nine miles of which had any path. These difficulties also came with a cost. Doctors had to pay for their travel expenses, equipment, and

medicines. Even with the best will in the world, operating in such conditions would have been prohibitively expensive. If they were to cover their expenses, doctors working in the Highlands would have to charge at extortionate rates, rates that the crofters could not afford.

Indeed, the rents paid by the crofters often went towards dwellings that were health hazards in and of themselves. The condition of housing was a major issue raised in the report, in particular with the threat of tuberculosis. The report found:

houses of practically only one room, with damp walls, damp clay floors, sunless interiors, a vitiated and smoky atmosphere, and the cattle under the same roof with the human inmates, the surrounds usually badly drained, and the site often damp. When a case if [sic] phthisis (tuberculosis) occurs in one of these houses, isolation is impossible.

Conditions were abhorrent and a breeding ground for disease.

In response to these conditions, the Dewar Report recommended a radical solution: creating and completely reorganising medical services in the Highlands and Islands under one service. It would be funded by the state, guaranteeing doctors a minimum salary and additional expenses for travel, with massive subsidies for the healthcare costs of the poor – including free healthcare if they could not afford it – and a major investment in the infrastructure of the Highlands and Islands. This investment would look to build new community hospitals, reorganise existing nursing associations and set up new ones, improve the communication network with telephones and telegrams and provide an ambulance service. This was to be provided by an annual grant of £42,000 (about £4 million today). The result was the creation of the Highlands and Islands Medical Service. HIMS had an unsettled start; its first achievement was establishing a nurse on St Kilda in 1914, but the First World War delayed the expansion of the whole service. The provisions of the service started slowly, and by 1929, 175 nurses and 160 doctors covered 150 practices throughout the Highlands. Even many of the more urban towns of the Highlands saw increased provision, with Stornoway receiving its first resident surgeon in 1924 and Wick receiving the same in 1931. In 1933, HIMS

provided the first-ever air ambulance service in the world.

One of the most important legacies of HIMS was to recognise the link between living conditions and infrastructure, and the failures of the medical system. It led to the establishment of nursing associations, the investment in telephones and other communication infrastructure, the building of local hospitals and roads, the creation of an ambulance and the financing of doctors, all effectively free at the point of use, which transformed the health circumstances of the Highlands and Islands.

HIMS was a system tailor-made for the Highlands and Islands of the early 20th century. It transformed the healthcare prospects of some of the poorest people in Britain, and it would go on to help inspire the NHS and similar medical systems worldwide. HIMS deeply influenced the setting up of the Frontier Nursing Service (FNS) in Kentucky after its founder, Mary Breckinridge, was inspired by her experience of HIMS during a visit to Scotland in the early 20s. The FNS mainly focused on midwifery and child healthcare in rural, underprivileged areas and is still operating today.

HIMS has lessons for the provision of modern healthcare. Its ambition and investment in connecting communities across the Highlands shows what can be done when proper state intervention is tried. As Scotland prepares for care service reform, workers and trade unions are warning that instead of an ambitious state-run service, we are sliding towards propping up our existing failed care system and the profits of the companies that run it. Instead of connecting and coordinating our care system through public control of the sector, we will still see a system raked by competition and inundated with low pay and abhorrent working conditions that are merely managed differently. Given the utterly inadequate state of mental healthcare, social care and trans healthcare today maybe each of these areas deserves its own HIMS.

For those interested in HIMS, the 1943 film by Kay Mander called Highland Doctor is incredibly informative, engaging, and at points quite funny. It can be found easily on YouTube.

BOLD PROPOSALS

IS THE JURY OUT?

Anna Murray reviews the debate about juryless trials that is torn between the necessity of maintaining the right to a fair trial, and the responsibility to protect victims of sexual violence.

In 2021, an independent review group chaired by Lady Dorrian, the Lord Justice Clerk of Scotland, published a report which contains recommendations as to how the Scottish Government might improve the judicial system's treatment of serious sexual offence cases. One recommendation is for a pilot scheme which would see a certain number of rape trials be tried only by single judges, instead of the established practice of jury trials.

The proposal and its subsequent inclusion in a Government Bill has garnered extreme controversy, particularly amongst the legal profession, with members of Bar Associations across the country declaring that they would refuse to take part in such a pilot.

The review group's main objective was to provide guidance on how to improve the experience for complainers of serious sexual assault when they deal with the judicial system. The report comprehensively details the need for reform in this area of the law, while acknowledging the need to maintain an accused's right to a fair trial. Low conviction rates, issues with the way judges can direct juries regarding their deliberations, and so called 'rape myths' that members of juries may believe, are all flagged as problems which the introduction of single-judge trials could assist in solving.

The idea of jury-less trials was not uncontentious even within the review group. The report notes that members themselves were split on the prospect, and emphasises that a pilot scheme should be used only to determine the effectiveness of single-judge trials, before further assessment in wake of the pilot. The report also includes guidance aimed at improving the existing method of jury trials, mostly focused on educating juries more effectively regarding the decision they are making.

Despite its contentious nature, the proposal was taken on board by the Scottish Government. *The Victims, Witnesses, and Justice Reform (Scotland) Bill*, introduced on the 23rd of April this year, proposes to give Scottish Ministers powers to authorise for certain trials of rape or attempted rape allegations to be jury-less. The Bill is only in Parliament's first stage of deliberation, and not yet in the statute books. Even so, the inclusion of the pilot scheme has both increased the probability of its being enacted and intensified the debate.

Perhaps the most eager supporters of the use of single-judge trials are campaigners for the rights of victims of sexual violence. Trials of serious sexual violence allegations are far less likely to end in conviction compared to conviction rates of other crimes. Scottish Government figures published in 2022 showed the conviction rate for rape to be only 51%, opposed to the 91% overall conviction rate.

Sandy Brindley, Chief Executive of Rape Crisis Scotland draws a connection between this low conviction rate, and the possible prejudices that jury members may have regarding victims of sexual violence. There is, Brindley notes, “significant evidence that myths about sexual violence influence juries in their decision making.” There are myths, for instance, regarding how a ‘real’ rape victim would respond or behave. The length of time the complainer took to report the offence to the police, or whether or not they used force as a way to show non-consent, may unfairly factor into a jury’s decision, especially when - as the 2021 report highlighted - there are already problems with how juries are directed to determine their verdicts. The hope is that replacing juries with single judges will reduce the likelihood of these preconceptions seeping into verdicts, resulting in rape conviction rates more comparable to the national average.

Others, however, dispute that a change in the category and quantity of decision-makers will necessarily remove bias. Sheila Webster, President of the Law Society of Scotland which represents and regulates all solicitors in Scotland, argues: “A jury is a better reflection of Scottish society than a single judge can possibly be. Juries act as an essential and effective safeguard against the potential for unconscious biases to unfairly influence trial outcomes.” As of November 2022, 73.4% of the judiciary are male, and 82% are over 50. These figures do not necessarily mean that judges will individually hold biases. Judges, no matter their demographic, will inevitably possess a level of legal knowledge and experience that cannot be expected of members of the public, and which may help them to make fully-informed, unbiased decisions. The figures do however show a judiciary which demographically does not reflect the general public, and so is perhaps collectively at higher risk of harbouring certain prejudices, or at least is no less likely to hold these prejudices than juries.

Beyond the continuing possibility of bias, Webster argues from another principle. “Trial by jury for serious crimes is a basic right and cornerstone of our justice system”, Webster argues, and any use of juryless trials “will put that fundamental right in jeopardy with no discernible benefits.” The integrity of the right to a fair trial is of utmost importance to the legal profession. Through this lens, proposed boycotts by solicitors are understandable.

For Brindley, however, single-judge trials would not actually interfere with this right: “the removal of a jury is not a breach of the right to a fair trial under the European Convention on Human Rights. There is no right to a jury trial in Scotland.” Across the country, myriad trials are tried only by single sheriff judges, albeit for significantly less severe crimes than that of rape.

The key issue that motivated the original report remains the driving force behind the campaign for jury-less trials: the improvement of the experience of complainers in serious sexual assault cases. As Brindley puts it; “Survivors often tell us that going to court is as traumatic as their experience of sexual violence”, and “a pilot of single judge trials could be a positive step towards making engaging with the justice system an easier experience for survivors”. It is no wonder that the possibility of a pilot is so appealing.

Nonetheless, even if the Bill does become an Act of Parliament, unamended, legal professionals will need to facilitate the pilot. If they do decide to boycott it, it will be virtually impossible to carry it out. And Webster, the Law Society, and the members of the profession, remain resolute that “fundamental changes must not be made at the expense of the right to a fair and just trial”.

POLLUTERS MUST PAY

Ending the era of ecocide is essential if we are serious about climate and social justice, argues **Monica Lennon**.

For too long, major polluters have exploited our environment with no regard for the people and places they are harming. Consequently, the impacts of the climate and nature crisis are already being felt by millions of people around the world and will be felt even more severely by future generations. Yet those responsible for causing the most harm are rarely held to account. Left unchecked and un deterred, they continue exploiting people and the planet for their own gain, undermining responsible enterprises that seek to turn a profit without wrecking nature.

Scotland's biggest environmental disaster occurred thirty years ago when the MV Braer hit rocks during a storm off Shetland spilling 85,000 tonnes of light crude oil into the North Atlantic. Thousands of birds perished and up to a third of the local grey seal population was harmed. Braer's owners went on to receive more compensation than what the vessel was worth on the open market, with leaked papers later revealing it was not seaworthy. Hansard at the time of the incident records John Prescott arguing that the "main burden of such incidents is usually carried by the polluted, not the polluter."

Deepwater Horizon is another famous example of ecocide. The oil drilling platform explosion in the Gulf of Mexico killed eleven oil workers and thousands of birds, fish and mammals. The 2010 disaster caused lasting ecological damage, affecting over 1,000 miles of Gulf shoreline. BP was found responsible and liable for \$20 billion in civil and criminal penalties, but charges did not result in prison time.

Big corporations and senior decision-makers continue to take risks, putting people and the planet in danger. Perpetrators of eco destruction – and we should call it out as ecocide – cannot be allowed to get away with it any longer. It's time to make the polluter pay.

Around the world, people are organising and fighting back. Stop Ecocide International campaigns to make ecocide an international crime. Thanks to its diplomacy and advocacy work, many countries have already started progressing or advancing national ecocide legislation. This is in tandem with moves to amend the Rome Statute to make ecocide the fifth crime against peace, and prosecutable at the International Criminal Court, a cause backed by UK Labour.

Recent legal and political developments on ecocide law have taken place in countries including Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Brazil, Mexico, as well as at the level of the EU. Scotland must not be left behind in the battle against the big polluters. I have lodged proposals in the Scottish Parliament for a proposed Ecocide (Prevention) (Scotland) Bill. The launch of the consultation on 8th November has kickstarted a national conversation on using the criminal law in Scotland to prevent and punish ecocidal acts. Those who cause the most harm to our ecosystems must be held responsible for their actions.

Under these plans, Scotland could be the first part of the UK to criminalise ecocide. Prison sentences ranging from 10 to 20 years for the worst offenders are proposed, as well as financial sanctions worth up to 10% of worldwide turnover for companies, calculated over a three-year period. Liability for imprisonment would be aimed at senior decision makers. In the corporate world this would catch

responsible officials such as a director of a company, limited liability partnership or another entity which is not an individual, where there is evidence that the director directly contributed to a crime.

Those who commit wanton acts of environmental destruction must face the full force of the law. This principle led visionary Scottish barrister, the late Polly Higgins, to make the campaign to criminalise ecocide her life's work. Together with her Stop Ecocide International co-founder Jojo Mehta, Higgins argued that ecocide should be an international atrocity crime, of the same order as genocide and crimes against humanity. My proposal draws on their Independent Expert Panel definition of ecocide as "unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts."

Some may argue that this bid to stop ecocide is extreme. But the enabling of ecocide is extreme, as is failing to punish the perpetrators. The sanctions are subject to consultation, but there is growing public and cross-party support for criminalising ecocide in Scotland.

Tackling those at the top is an imperative. Everyone has a part to play in taking better care of our planet, but deflection from the main climate criminals leads to fingers being pointed at individuals and communities who get pilloried for driving to work or putting their paper and plastics in the wrong recycling bin.

Unsurprisingly many people experience 'climate anxiety' and feel overwhelmed by the lifestyle changes that are demanded of them. In *It's Not That Radical - Climate Action to Change the World*, Mikaela Loach unpacks the roots of the climate crisis to argue that the scale of the crisis has been toned down to be compatible with capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy.

While the science is widely accepted, it is seldom acted on. Inaction and delay breeds injustice. People are losing faith in political and industrial leaders to deliver a just transition and a transformed economy. Around the world, the poorest workers are disproportionately harmed by the impacts of the climate and ecological crisis. Trade unionists, youth climate activists and environmental campaigners commonly find themselves accused of being disruptive and dangerous, while the real climate criminals continue to deceive and destroy the environment.

Ecocide law is not a magic wand, but it is our best chance to protect our planet from profiteers who recklessly exploit it, with no regard for the safety and security of the natural environment. As James Connolly rallied, "Our demands most moderate are: we only want the earth."

To have your say before 9 February 2024 and support an ecocide law for Scotland, search 'Proposed Ecocide Bill smartsurvey' and complete the survey.

THE SOCIAL PRIORITIES OF HUMZA YOUSAF

Developing the wellbeing economy that the First Minister described in his Jimmy Reid Lecture will require government to rethink its economic priorities and activities, writes **Charis Scott**.

At the end of October, the First Minister spoke at the tenth annual Jimmy Reid Lecture in Glasgow City Chambers. In the midst of an extremely challenging situation for his own family, some of whom were trapped in Gaza, there was great appreciation around the room for Humza Yousaf honouring this commitment. As the evening marked the tenth anniversary of the annual lectures, Yousaf gave special honour to Jimmy Reid throughout his speech, which included a powerful quote from a speech given by Jimmy himself in 1972:

Government by the people for the people becomes meaningless unless it includes major economic decision-making by the people for the people. This is not simply an economic matter. In essence it is an ethical and moral question, for whoever takes the important economic decisions in society ipso facto determines the social priorities of that society.

Building on these principles, the First Minister spoke with grace and passion as he laid out his vision for a Wellbeing Economy in Scotland without poverty or inequality. It bore some resemblance to the vision of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance Scotland (WEAll Scotland): an economy designed to deliver good lives for all on a healthy planet, built on meaningful democratic processes throughout. A key focus here is on the ‘designed’ aspect. Achieving the vision for Scotland that the First Minister was setting out will require a fundamental redesign of how our economy is set to function.

In a just and compassionate Scotland, we cannot be content with an economy that is delivering growing levels of inequality and poverty while damaging the planet. It doesn’t have to be this way, and Yousaf rightly identified the failure of the current UK economy to reverse these dismal trends. But at the end of the speech we were left with the open question as to how he will achieve the redesign of our economy that is required.

Throughout his speech, Yousaf used the analogy of navigating choppy waters. The metaphor is often used when talking about our economy, and he extended the analogy further to talk about whose hand is on the tiller. Who is in control? We often hear calls for a steady hand to guide our economy but, as the First Minister said: “if you are sailing the ship in the wrong direction, it doesn’t matter if your hand is steady.”

The importance of participation was a welcome theme throughout his speech, from the opening quote above to the nautical metaphor running through it. In establishing a Wellbeing Economy, it is essential that people across Scotland have a voice and the power to influence and shape decision-making. In Yousaf’s terms, it is not just one hand on the tiller. It is essential that power is shared.

So, is Humza Yousaf sailing the ship of our economy in a better direction from the one that has failed us over the past decades? Despite encouraging words highlighting the need for sharing of power and putting the needs of people and planet first, there was little in his speech to suggest that he is willing to draw on the new thinking of the Wellbeing Economy movement, leave behind outdated economic recipes, and seriously attempt to redesign our economy along 21st century principles.

It was concerning to hear Yousaf continuing to place so much

unquestioned emphasis on economic growth. In the 21st century, we need a much more ambitious and honest conversation about the purpose of our economy, about the kind of economic activities we need to grow and which ones we need to power down, and about who our economy should serve first and foremost.

It is not enough to say that our economic model should place the importance of people’s health and happiness alongside the imperative of economic growth. Health and happiness need to be the clear priorities.

We welcome the First Minister’s desire to utilise economic growth for the end of eradicating poverty and inequality. However, his strategy falls back on the old kind of economic recipes that have been tried and tested - and have failed. After decades of economic growth, poverty is still widespread in Scotland and around the world. Inequality has skyrocketed. The incessant increase in the use of energy and resources, driven by economic growth, has brought our climate and nature to the point of collapse.

Wellbeing Economics is about being bold and trying new economic recipes that can tackle the root causes of these problems head on. At the moment, the detail isn’t there as to how Yousaf is going to put his vision into practice. How is he making sure that it’s different this time round?

Earlier this year, we joined with charities, economists, businesses and unions to set out our collective vision of a Wellbeing Economy. We put together a long-term strategy with key recommendations that are within the reach of the Scottish Government. There is growing support across Scotland for rhetoric to be turned into action. Just a few months ago, we published a letter signed by over 200 people that laid out tangible short-term actions the Scottish Government can take right now:

- Transform the National Performance Framework into a Wellbeing Framework and significantly strengthen its power and reach.
- Use devolved tax powers to share Scotland’s income and wealth more evenly and to support public investment in the strong social safety net, universal basic services, fair public sector wages, and environmental improvements needed for a Wellbeing Economy.
- Reshape the business environment in Scotland to facilitate a shift towards purposeful and democratic business practices that support collective wellbeing and global environmental sustainability and do not profit from undermining them.

At WEAll Scotland, we look forward to seeing the detailed plan of action promised by the First Minister in his speech. It is essential that establishing a Wellbeing Economy in Scotland moves from being a nice sound bite in an emotive speech, to a programme of tangible action that delivers for the people of Scotland.

THE BORDERS OF OURSELVES

Naomi Klein's *Doppelganger: A Trip into the Mirror World* (Penguin, 2023) explores the dark corners of our political era and seeks hope only in the possibility for collective action, finds **Jack Ferguson**.

The story begins, fittingly, at Occupy Wall Street. It was in a bathroom close to Zucotti Park in 2011 that Naomi Klein first overheard people confusing her for her namesake, and that she was forced to utter what would become watchwords in the years to come:

I think you are thinking of Naomi Wolf.

Naomi Klein is a political investigative journalist, and the author of landmark critical books like *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine* and *This Changes Everything*. She's known for trenchant critiques of corporate power, the use of crises to push neoliberal policies without opposition, and the forces driving global climate change.

Naomi Wolf is a longer-established writer, who once at least had the larger profile. Her 1990 book *The Beauty Myth* helped establish her as a prominent face of 90s US feminism. This led to a respected career in the media and research, as well as political roles advising the presidential campaign of Al Gore.

But something started to change in Wolf's outlook during the 21st century. She moved away from the issues on which she had built her earlier work, and towards steadily more strident and nationalistic alarm-sounding about supposed threats to the US republic. She increasingly claimed that America was a hair's breadth away from full-blown fascism.

During the COVID pandemic, Wolf's transformation intensified. During this time, she fully embraced the conspiracist right, becoming an outspoken opponent of basic health measures such as mask wearing and vaccinations. In doing so, she set alight to her reputation among much of her former readership, and lost many personal friends. But she gained a whole new and lucrative audience, as she was warmly welcomed into the folds of a growing global movement to play the role of 'the liberal who saw the light'.

Doppelganger: A Trip Into the Mirror World is both a personal memoir and the product of deep research into corners of the political world that many of us would prefer not to look. It attempts to make sense of the vertigo-inducing sensation that has afflicted Klein since the number of people either chastising or praising her for the actions of the 'other Naomi' snowballed, and her own sense of self as a public figure began to destabilise.

In the process, much more is revealed about the darkness of our political era, why our societies are failing so many of the great challenges of our times, and why public life seems to have descended to previously unimaginable levels of absurdity. The book uses the image of the doppelganger or double, beloved of popular culture, art and psychology alike, to explore the hidden Other sides from which we all individually and as societies avert our eyes. It also illuminates the way this mirroring has distorted politics, transforming radical narratives into twisted fun-house images of themselves, and leading to a breakdown in a shared sense of reality, where every potential fact can be ignored if denied with sufficient intensity.

Wolf's personal odyssey coincides with the rise of political

forces that Klein (following William Callison and Quinn Slobodian) describes as 'diagonalist': claiming to be neither left nor right, involving the use of language and individuals that are appropriated from a left wing or liberal background – but in fact are bent and used in order to bolster a more far-right worldview. Across the world we have seen the rise to power of leaders who use populist rhetoric, the hyping of prejudice and majoritarian grievances to claim an 'anti-elite' posture – all the while in practice supporting the most corrupt and kleptocratic forms of capitalism through their policies.

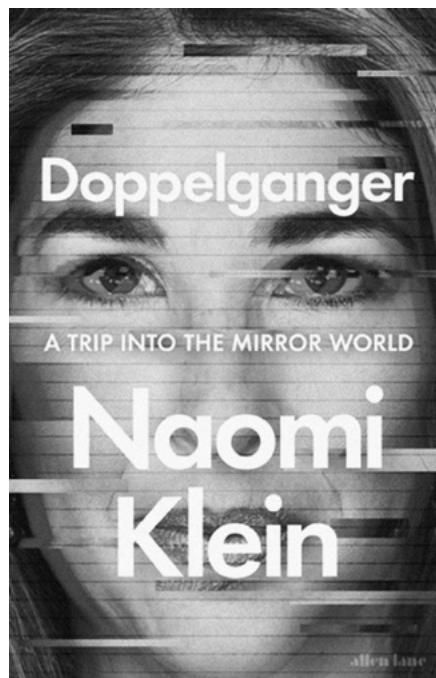
Conspiracy culture plays a key role in the rise of this kind of politics, giving the aesthetic experience of challenging powerful forces and asserting agency, but in a form that by its very nature can never lead anywhere, or create any kind of impactful change. Moreover, conspiracy memes frequently channel well-founded distrust and suspicion away from corporate power and political actors, and towards traditionally scapegoated groups, with notable examples including migrants, ethnic minorities, queer and disabled people.

In recent years there has been vigorous debate among political scientists and commentators as to the extent that "fascist" is the correct descriptor for figures such as Trump, Orban, Modi, Meloni or Le Pen (to name but a few). It's an ambiguity that these characters deliberately cultivate and play with themselves, using dog whistles that allow them plausible deniability, while building coalitions with more open elements of the extreme right.

Undoubtedly, part of the reticence from some to deploy the F-word relates to the ways that figures like Klein's doppelganger have been quick to cry the wolf of fascism when attacking real or imagined expansions of state power. Naomi Wolf spent much of the Bush administration arguing that the genuinely authoritarian policies of the period were a prelude to full on fascism, and now sees the threat of dictatorship in basic public health measures. Despite this, it does seem that we are now at the end of the folk tale – where the wolf has finally really arrived.

Less touched on by Klein is the way this political diagonal also extends into the left itself, as political figures purporting to put forward a left programme concede ground to reactionary ideas. Whether it be Keir Starmer wrapping himself in the Union Jack, Jean Luc Melenchon speaking of migrants "stealing bread from French workers", or the anti-immigrant stance of Die Linke politician Sahra Wagenknecht, this is also a widespread phenomenon. In the process, the shared meaning of terms like left and right is further broken down, resulting in ever greater confusion, disorientation, and vulnerability to conspiracy, racist or far right narratives.

Perhaps the most egregious modern example of this appropriation of liberatory language for reactionary ends is the many ways in which the COVID conspiracy movement abused the memories of movements for racial justice. Frequent wildly inappropriate comparisons were made to the Holocaust and Civil Rights era, while anti-maskers shamelessly stole the dying words of Eric Garner that became a slogan of Black Lives Matter: "I can't breathe."



This dovetails with a discussion of the ways that racial and ethnic identities introduce a further, imposed level of doubling, where individuals are forced to face the identity that racist societies ascribed to them, as described eloquently by W.E.B. Du Bois and James Baldwin. No matter who an individual is in themselves, or what work they have done to create an identity in defiance of stereotypes, “you will always stand in as a representative of your despised group. You are not you; you are your ethnic/racial/religious double, and you can’t shake that double because you did not create it.”

Klein reflects on the ways the historic legacy and continued presence of antisemitism has impacted her own Jewish identity, and how traumas inflicted on a group continue to be lived and re-experienced across generations. She recognises that this form of doubling may be part of the explanation for her own doppelgänger, as a society still riven by antisemitic tropes conflates two prominent writers named Naomi under the racist image of a ‘striving Jewess’.

A genealogy of most popular apocryphal conspiracy theories of course leads right back to such antisemitic lore, which is continually recast and updated for changed conditions. Myths of Jewish economic control, the ‘socialism of fools’, are the grotesque doppelgänger of genuine critique of capitalism. Klein even suggests that the presence of so many key Jewish figures in the historic socialist movement may be related precisely to a desire to elucidate the real causes of class oppression, and to expose false scapegoating.

Klein identifies the psychological impact on everyone of living in a society where the values of corporate capitalism have penetrated into the deepest parts of ourselves, our bodies, and our relations to others. She made her name and, in an irony she notes, established her own personal brand, with the publication of *No Logo*, a 1999 attack on the ways corporate culture was growing to dominate all spheres of life. Twenty-four years later, she is horrified to note how this process has gone further than she ever thought imaginable.

Revealingly, she highlights the origins of the term ‘brand’ in the burning of identifying marks into the skins of slaves, creating an identity for them to be recognised and exploited. Personal branding remains a violent process today, as people learn to package and present themselves and their most intimate traumas as social currency.

The desire for a ‘perfected, optimised and quantified self’ drives people to create their digital doppelgängers online, and to work obsessively on their body through exercise and diet. But the dark mirror of this ‘self-improvement’ is the potential for it to flip into a rage at others who don’t share these pre-occupations, who are hated for being fat, perceived as lazy or with a poor diet. Many COVID sceptics believed their regimen of body work would protect them and, conversely, they resented being asked to make sacrifices for those they considered ‘less healthy’ than themselves.

Fundamentally, Klein argues that the COVID pandemic caused a wave of cognitive dissonance, due to the fact that it exposed the lies on which our societies had built previous decades’ politics. Instead of atomised, rationally calculating individuals, we were revealed as inevitably entangled beings, with obligations to each other and all of the living world.

It’s here that she’s able to find a small amount of hard-rationed hope. In softening the borders of ourselves, we open the door to the possibility of achieving change through collective action, and changing ourselves through our interactions with others, as was seen for example by the mutual aid efforts during the pandemic. More than this, we can open ourselves to the non-human kin with which we share the planet. As Klein concludes:

“Time to loosen the grip of various forms of proprietary pain and selfhood, and reach toward many different forms of possible connection and kin, toward anyone who shares a desire to confront the forces of annihilation and extermination, and their mindsets of purity and perfection.”

A COUP THAT SHOOK THE WORLD



Enas Magzoub reviews *Aye Venceremos! Scotland and Solidarity with Chile in the 1970s - and Why It Still Matters Today*, by Colin Turbett (Calton Books, 2023).

The Chilean coup of 1973 was a stark reminder of the devastating consequences of imperialism and the ruthless pursuit of power. *Aye Venceremos!* is a passionate perspective on this dark chapter in Chile's history by an unwavering advocate of Salvador Allende's progressive government.

This book seeks to unearth the truth behind a coup that shook the world and forever altered the course of Chilean democracy. The heart of the book is a defence of Allende and his socialist agenda. It presents Allende not as a dangerous radical, but as a visionary leader who dared to challenge the entrenched interests of the Chilean elite and their imperialistic backers, and was dedicated to improving the lives of Chile's marginalised populations through peaceful and democratic means.

The wealth of its sources, including first-hand accounts of the coup's unfolding from Chileans and political refugees, and a range of declassified documents, allow even lay readers to gain a deep understanding of the complex political landscape in Chile leading up to the coup. By emphasizing the positive impact of his policies of land reform and wealth redistribution, and by highlighting the material improvements in education, healthcare, and workers' rights during this period, Turbett challenges the prevailing narrative that Allende's government was disastrous for Chile's economy.

The narrative also brings to light the extent of external interference in Chilean politics. It offers an account of the United States' covert operations to undermine Allende's government and its support for the military coup led by General Augusto Pinochet, as well as the Thatcher government's support for the rise of fascism in the region. The human rights abuses, tortures, and executions under Pinochet, and the complicity of the United States and Britain in these atrocities, amount to a compelling case that the West turned a blind eye to human rights abuses in pursuit of its own geopolitical interests.

The book also provides a nuanced analysis of the Chilean opposition to Allende. It reframes the popular narrative of a united front against his government, revealing the deep divisions and contradictions within the opposition camp. This portrayal challenges the simplistic notion that Allende's government was widely opposed by the Chilean proletariat. One chapter explores the role of the media in shaping public perception during this turbulent period, mounting a persuasive case that the Chilean media, largely controlled by powerful elites, was pivotal in demonising Allende and his government.

The scope of the book touches on the impact of the rise of fascism in all aspects of life, from football to labour relations in the UK, noting the reaction from workers in Scotland who stood in solidarity with the Chilean people, and offering a nod to the 2018 documentary *Nae Pasaran*.

What distinguishes this book from other communist accounts of the unfolding events is its particular focus on reactions in Scotland, which have often been overlooked by British communists. There is an especially moving section in the book which, without giving too much away, shares the experiences of Chilean refugees and their families resettling in Scotland, highlighting the unity and cooperation of comrades across continents.

While Turbett's upfront perspective shapes the overall tone of his reflections, he avoids one-sided narrative, and does not overlook some of the complexities and challenges faced by the Allende government. A thought-provoking and meticulously researched book that presents an unabashedly leftist perspective on the Chilean coup of 1973, *Aye Venceremos!* challenges prevailing Western narratives, sheds light on the positive aspects of Salvador Allende's government, and underscores the devastating consequences of imperialistic agendas.

DREAMER OF TOMORROW

In a nation beset by extraction and drought, the poetry of Munir Niazi yearns for justice not escape, writes **Ali Shehzad Zaidi**.

Munir Niazi (1923-2006), who wrote both in Urdu and Punjabi, swayed between hope and despair as Pakistan withered under military rule. His poetry, which is gentler than that of his contemporaries Ahmed Faraz and Faiz Ahmed Faiz, furthers the range of expression within the imagist and modernist traditions of Urdu poetry. He mastered the nazm, the main verse form of Urdu poetry, as well as the more disciplined ghazal, the Urdu poetic form consisting of five to fifteen self-contained couplets that create an overarching architecture. Niazi is celebrated for having affirmed the primacy of the imagination in a repressive country.

As a young man, Niazi was forced to leave his native village in eastern Punjab and to migrate to the newly created Pakistan after the partition of India in 1947. This uprooting, the death of his first wife in a road accident, and the predicament of Pakistan, underlies the sadness in his poetry. Nonetheless, his ideals spurred his literary creativity, as can be seen in “Compass of Stars”:

Stars
to point me the way –
one on my right,
the other on my left.
A third in front of me
dim and obscure
like an earthen lamp
The fourth behind me
enmeshed
in the dark clouds
of memory.

The faint third star suggests an uncertain future enveloped in mist, while the fourth star hints at how the past shaped his future and his poetry.

In “The Point of Intersection,” the swirling winds of a revolutionary spirit evoke life experiences, ancestral memory, folk tradition, and more:

Restless, swirling winds –
Come to my help!
Voices of my lost dead –
Come to my help!
Let us turn this world
Into a paradise.
Let us smash the old gods
And usher in the new –
The glorious gods
Of beauty, truth, and love.
Restless, swirling winds!
Voices of my lost dead!

Foremost among the voices of Niazi’s lost dead are those of the Sufi Punjabi poets Bulleh Shah and Sultan Bahu who were a bridge between religions and whose lyrics are still sung today throughout the Indian subcontinent.

Niazi’s aspirations remain undiminished in “Signalling to a Friendly Star to Keep Shining,” in which star and poet, the outer and the inner, merge in a journey towards the unattainable:

My dream-star!
My beacon of hope!
Be it the darkness before dawn –
Night of inconsolable grief –
Last horizon of an arduous journey –
The roof of an ill-omened house –
Fruit-laden trees –
Barren water-logged land –
City of vibrant expectations –
Wilderness haunted by memories.
Wherever I may be –
Keep shining.
My dream-star!
My beacon of hope!

The dream-star represents a quest rather than a destination. In the words of Sam Hamill, “[t]he moon and the sun are travelers through eternity. Even the years wander on. Whether drifting through life on a boat or climbing toward old age leading a horse, each day is a journey, and the journey itself is home.” The image of “an ill-omened house” in the above poem recalls Niazi’s lost childhood home in the Punjab, a place name derived from the Persian words panj (‘five’) and ab (‘waters’), and which is the “Land of Five Rivers” mentioned in the Mahabharata.

The childhood memory of “fruit-laden trees” contrasts with the grim present-day reality of a Pakistan beset by drought and floods. Water-logging and salinity have damaged several million hectares in the Indus valley. The Himalayan glaciers that provide water to Pakistan’s cities are disappearing due to global warming. With 68% of its citizens dependent on firewood for cooking, Pakistan loses roughly 27,000 hectares of forest a year. Like Niazi’s childhood home, Pakistan is an “ill-omened house.”

Pakistan was in better shape when, as a young man during the sixties, Niazi wrote features for radio and television and earned acclaim for his film songs. However, the censorship and repression of successive military regimes threatened his livelihood as editor, journalist, and poet. During the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq, which lasted from 1977 to 1988, writers went into exile and literary journals ceased publication. The regime carried out public floggings. Saudi-funded fanatics began to massacre religious minorities in increasing numbers. The Pakistani press euphemistically terms the ongoing genocide “targeted killings.”

The dictatorship also legally sanctioned punishments such as stoning and amputation, which have no basis whatsoever in the Quran. These punishments, which are taken from the Old Testament, were justified, not by literal interpretations of the Quran, but by willful misreading that precludes debate, reason, and history. Blasphemy laws, and the dark scowls of men whose deeds were written on their faces, all but ended theological disputation, for cogent argumentation ceases at the point of a barrel of a gun.

After the onset of the U.S. War on Terror in 2001, Pakistan experienced a steady increase in terrorism. Suicide bombers targeted Sufi shrines, Shia mosques, Christian churches, and the Pakistani army itself, which had supported various terror groups for its own strategic ends, first in Afghanistan, and then in both Indian and Pakistani-occupied Kashmir. It is understandable, then, Niazi should have despaired as in "Futility":

Why complain
and to whom?
This whole world
is rotten
to the core.

How,
in the name of heaven,
can you preserve
what must one day
end?

A lie
has subjugated
the city of God.
Why then prattle
of truth?

Nothing has
any meaning any more.
Compliance or refusal –
acceptance or revolt –
All so utterly futile.

The "lie that has subjugated city of god" refers to the murderous and ostentatious orthodoxies that impose the lowest common religious denominator as divine mandate in service to capitalism. Saudi-funded mosques and madrassas, in particular profoundly altered the mentality of Pakistanis.

Seemingly a painful mirage, Niazi's dreams invoke a new spiritual dawn, as in "Eagle of the Morning Sun":

Another chapter
in the book of life
is finished:
Youth's sweet torment
comes to an end.

Tantalizing chimeras
of the desert:
birds hurled
from cloud to cloud –
deceitful whores.

Morning sun
let down your net
in water –
with your sharp talons
defang my dreams

In this poem, Niazi yearns for divine mercy to fulfil his thirst for justice, thereby turning his dreams of another tomorrow from pain to joy. The eagle in the poem title represents spiritual ascension, power, and dreams reborn in the hearts of readers.

Niazi came to recognize that his dreams would not be realised in his lifetime, if at all. The dreamer of tomorrow was writing for another age, as he conveys in "Now Is Not The Time":

Eyes of innocence
(‘magic casements’)
luminous as stars:
glowing embers.
Every wound is a valley –
a pain
that nothing will dissolve.
Now is not the time
for love.
All happiness
has been squeezed out
of the udders of night
and the heart's subterranean mirror
reflects only
what was
and what might have been.
Defer your dreams:
cloud, rendezvous, cathartic rain.

Niazi sought justice, not escape. His dreams, however deferred, were meant to release Pakistan from its spiritual drought. The phrase 'magic casements' in "Now Is Not The Time" is taken from Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale": "Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam / Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn." It was chosen by Daud Kamal, the translator of the poems in this essay, who taught English literature at the University of Peshawar until his death in 1987.

Niazi understood that his dreams would be fulfilled someday in the hearts of his readers. In "Horizons," he meditates on his imminent death and the indefinite deferral of his dreams:

Maddened
by her own beauty
the moon
plunges into the river
and drowns herself.

Rain
on roofs, streets, graveyards.
The wind's savage cry.
Death
is the final estrangement.

Strange seeds
rot and germinate
in memory.
I turn to you
and the horizons meet.

The moon represents the ineffable and, in a narrower context, a yearning for a just social order in Pakistan. Through his childhood memories, Niazi sought to cleanse the polluted wellsprings of existence and to thereby effect a lost paradise. His dreams and longings – those "strange seeds" – are destined to germinate and bear fruit in the hearts of his readers.

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