

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

Steve Witkoff, **Donald Trump's** envoy, said in an interview that **Vladimir Putin**, Russia's president, agreed to "robust" security guarantees for **Ukraine** by its allies. He compared the [plans discussed](#) by Mr Trump and Mr Putin at a meeting on Friday to NATO's Article 5 mutual-defence clause. Meanwhile a European "coalition of the willing" held a call on Sunday. European leaders will join Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, when he meets Mr Trump in Washington on Monday.

Israel's army said **Gazans** in "combat zones" will be given shelter equipment from Sunday before it moves them to "safe zones" in [the enclave's](#) south. Israel is planning to occupy Gaza city in a sweeping new offensive. Israelis are taking part in demonstrations and a general strike to pressure the government to instead strike a deal with [Hamas](#) that would ensure the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza.

Germany criticised the "aggressive" behaviour of **China** in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea ahead of a visit by its foreign minister to Japan and Indonesia. Johann Wadephul stressed the need for internationally binding rules. Earlier this week the

Chinese navy said it “drove away” a US Navy destroyer from the disputed Scarborough Shoal; America contests this account.

The Republican governors of Ohio, South Carolina and West Virginia will deploy hundreds of **National Guard** troops to **Washington, DC** at the request of the Trump administration. Mr Trump claims the use of the armed forces will [curb crime and homelessness](#). On Saturday the Justice Department retracted its move to replace Pamela Smith, the city’s police chief, with an “emergency police commissioner”.

The Canadian government ordered **Air Canada** to resume all its flights a day after a strike by unionised cabin staff had caused about 700 flights to be grounded. It was the first strike by Air Canada staff since 1985. The government will require the Canadian Union of Public Employees, which represents around 10,000 of the airline’s flight attendants, to go to binding arbitration, which the union had opposed.

Flash floods and landslides killed more than 300 people in **Pakistan** and Pakistan-administered **Kashmir**. The disasters were caused by cloudbursts, sudden downpours which are common during monsoon season. Authorities have declared several disaster zones and said they expect heavy rainfall to continue until August 21st. Earlier this week, flooding killed at least 60 people in a part of Kashmir controlled by India.

Hurricane Erin was downgraded from a category-five hurricane, the highest level on the scale, to category three. Winds reached speeds of 257 kilometres per hour as the storm passed the Caribbean Sea on Saturday. The storm is expected to pass to the east of the Turks and Caicos islands and the Bahamas, which are part of the Caribbean, on Sunday night and Monday.

Word of the week: Vereine, the colourful clubs and associations that are the backbone of German society. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: EPA/Shutterstock

Israel's strike against the war

Workers from Israeli universities, local authorities and businesses have joined in a nationwide strike to demand a ceasefire agreement in Gaza and the return of hostages that Hamas still holds in the enclave. The action follows the announcement by Israel's prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, that the country will escalate its military campaign in Gaza by seizing control of Gaza city.

Groups representing the families of hostages have called Mr Netanyahu's plan a "death sentence" to those still held captive; some of the families are supporting the strike. However, Histadrut, Israel's largest labour union, which participated in a similar strike in September, has said it will not do so this time (although it will support workers who take their own decision to strike).

Condemnation of the conflict [has spread from the fringes](#) of Israeli society to the centre. A growing chorus of Israeli voices are opposed to the war—including some ex-generals and mainstream politicians.



Photograph: EPA/Shutterstock

Change around the corner in Bolivia

Bolivians have started to vote in presidential and parliamentary elections. They promise to be dramatic. The Movement to Socialism (MAS) has ruled the country almost uninterrupted since 2006. Evo Morales was president for most of that time. But the MAS is now in trouble. Mr Morales and Luis Arce, the current president, who is also from MAS, have long been fighting. Neither is on the ballot. Mr Arce's terrible management of the economy wrecked his chances. And a court blocked Mr Morales on term-limit grounds; he is holed up in [Bolivia's coca-growing region](#), avoiding arrest for statutory rape (he says the charge is politically motivated).

That leaves the field wide open. Leading the polls are Samuel Doria Medina, a centrist tycoon, and Jorge Quiroga, a right-wing former president. Neither will get close to winning in the first round so a run-off, without any candidate from MAS, is likely in October. After 20 years, Bolivians look set to vote for change.



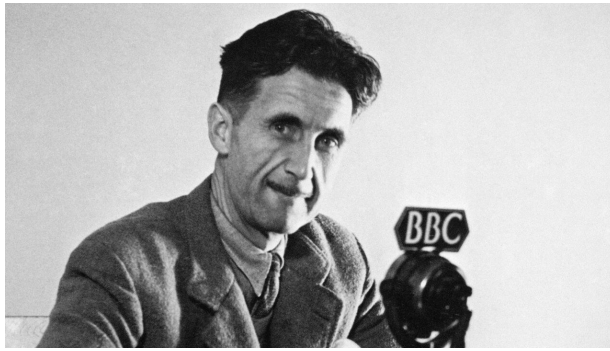
Photograph: Ursula Coyote/Lionsgate

A new kind of “Americana”

In the late 19th century Native Americans believed that “ghost shirts” had spiritual powers that would protect them from the bullets of white settlers. One such garment is at the centre of “Americana”, a Western-inspired thriller now in cinemas in America.

Set in modern times, the film follows Penny Jo Poplin (Sydney Sweeney) and “Lefty” Ledbetter (Paul Walter Hauser) as they attempt to steal a ghost shirt apparently worth \$500,000. On the heist they encounter an unscrupulous antiques dealer, a woman on the run and a group of Native Americans seeking to reclaim the artefact.

It is a skilful debut by Tony Tost, the writer-director, though there are strong echoes of the works of Quentin Tarantino and the Coen brothers. His deft plot examines the American dream and questions the idea that “Americana”—like the Statue of Liberty and Mount Rushmore—represent the country’s culture.



Photograph: Granger/Shutterstock

Which was George Orwell's greatest novel?

Any list of the 20th century's best prose writers that does not put George Orwell in the top five is worthless. A peerless reporter, arguer and analyst, he also wrote six novels, perhaps the most important of which was published 80 years ago on Sunday.

"Animal Farm" is an allegory about the Soviet Union under Stalinism. The characters include Squealer, a propagandist boar; Minimus, a poetic pig; and Napoleon, the boar-as-Stalin, who ends up indistinguishable from the human overlords he urges his fellow beasts to overthrow. "All animals are equal", one of Napoleon's seven revolutionary commandments, soon gains an extra clause: "but some animals are more equal than others."

Among Orwell's novels, "1984" may be better known. But "Animal Farm", despite its simplicity, is arguably the better work. That is because it is not just "about" communism, but about human nature. Bracingly anti-utopian, it argues not only that ends can never justify means, but that means matter most.



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of this week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

Peter Pendergest, Burbank, California, America

Anna Powell, Roswell, Georgia, America

Penny Dodd, Calgary, Canada

They all gave the correct answers of: the perch, The Chain, Vince Gill, league and Edward Furlong. The theme is imperial measurements: a perch is $\frac{1}{160}$ th of an acre, a chain is 22 yards, a gill is 5 imperial ounces, a league is three miles and a furlong is 220 yards.

Everybody is interesting for an hour, but few people can last more than two.

V.S. Naipaul