

The Economist

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Now we're talking

Turkey torn apart

Theresa Maybe, Britain's indecisive PM

Nestlé goes on a health kick

Meet China's Shakespeare

Voice computing comes of age

Albania	ALL900	Croatia	HRK48	France	€6.50	Ireland	€6.50	Latvia	€6.50	Netherlands	€6.50	Romania	RON29	Spain	€6.50
Austria	€6.50	Cyprus	€6.50	Germany	€6.50	Israel	NIS43.00	Lebanon	LE13.000	Nigeria	Naira 1,700	Saudi Arabia	Rials 45	Sweden	SKR66
Bahrain	Dinar 4.50	Czech Rep.	CZK199	Gibraltar	GIP4.70	Italy	€6.50	Lithuania	€6.50	Norway	NKR66	Serbia	RSD720	Switzerland	CHF10
Belgium	€6.50	Denmark	DKK53	Greece	€6.50	Kazakhstan	KZT1,285	Luxembourg	€6.50	Poland	PLN29	Slovakia	€6.50	Turkey	TL18
Bosnia	BAM16	Estonia	€6.50	Hungary	HUF2,170	Kenya	KShs680	Malta	€6.50	Portugal cont.	€6.50	Slovenia	€6.50	UAE	Dirhams 45
Bulgaria	BGN13	Finland	€6.50	Iceland	ISK860	Kuwait	Dinar 3.60	Montenegro	€6.50	Qatar	Rials 45	South Africa	R70.00	UK	£5.00



Chinese economics

Western takeaway

Unlikely Partners: Chinese Reformers, Western Economists, and the Making of Global China. By Julian Gewirtz. *Harvard University Press*; 389 pages; \$39.95. To be published in Britain on January 31st

IN 1985 James Tobin, a Nobel laureate in economics, delivered a talk at a conference in China. Mao had died less than a decade earlier and modern economic concepts, shorn of socialism, were still unfamiliar to many in the country, including the interpreter on this occasion. Struggling to find the right words, she burst into tears. Two conference participants stepped aside after Tobin spoke and, on the spot, devised the Chinese term for “macroeconomic management”. Future interpreters would have it easier.

Chinese officials and academics, especially those with a reformist bent, were acutely aware of their tenuous grasp on economics at the time. Five years earlier, Deng Xiaoping, the country’s paramount leader, had put it bluntly when meeting Robert McNamara, president of the World Bank: “We have lost touch with the world.”

With China’s economic rise now into its fourth decade, it is easy to forget how shaky its footing was at the start of its ascent. It began not just in poverty, but beset by basic uncertainty about how to develop. There was even disagreement over whether development, in so far as it entailed market forces, was the right goal.

The oft-told story is that the Communist Party forged ahead with policy experiments—“crossing the river by feeling for the stones”, as the Chinese reformers’ saying goes—and, little by little, found the ingredients for growth. There is much truth to this. But the role of Western economists in helping shape that journey is missing. “Unlikely Partners” by Julian Gewirtz, a doctoral candidate in Chinese history at Oxford (and an occasional reviewer for these pages), fills that gap. It vividly brings to life China’s economic debates from Mao’s death in 1976 until 1993, by which time the country’s direction was clearer.

The claim is not that Westerners were responsible for China’s development. A large constellation of Chinese reformers deserves the credit for that. Indeed, one of the book’s virtues is that it puts the spotlight on Zhao Ziyang, the Communist Party chief who wound up under house arrest after the 1989 Tiananmen protests. Mr Zhao has been written out of official histories, but his consistent support for bold thinking was critical to China’s success.

Nevertheless, to understand how Chi-

Fiction

Crazy city

Welcome to Lagos. By Chibundu Onuzo. *Faber and Faber*; 358 pages; £12.99

AT LEAST in their conception of the world, there are two broad categories of Nigerians—or for that matter Kenyans, Pakistanis, Chinese or anyone from the poor world. The vast majority are those for whom national boundaries represent insurmountable barriers, for whom even a bus ride to the city seems an other-worldly journey. And then there are those who flit between African and European cities as easily as if they were riding the Victoria line from Brixton to Green Park. They are the lucky ones with connections at embassies or stores of capital certified and triple-stamped by bank officials, or, best of all, the burgundy passports of the European Union.

Lagos, a sprawling shambles of some 21m souls, has its fair share of both categories, and they come crashing together in Chibundu Onuzo’s second novel, “Welcome to Lagos”.

Some welcome. It is hard to imagine a megacity less hospitable to newcomers. At every turn lurk scammers, thieves, crooked cops and rent-extracting ganglords. Into this metropolis come Chike and Yemi, two soldiers deserting their posts in the Niger Delta after one too many orders to shoot civilians and burn down villages. Along the way they meet, and become fellow travellers with, a motley crew of runaways: Fineboy, a militant fleeing from the very same army; Isoken, a young girl near-raped by those militants; and Oma, a housewife escaping her abusive husband. Clueless, practically penniless and unaccustomed to the nasty ways of the big city, they find refuge under a bridge until, one day, Fineboy finds an abandoned flat to squat in.

na found its way, it is also necessary to recognise the influence of foreign ideas. In some cases the impact was immediate. The concept of special economic zones, which enabled coastal regions to flourish, began with a Chinese vice-premier’s trip to western Europe in 1978, where he saw export-processing zones.

More often, the impact was diffuse. Academics trained in Marxist economics lapped up translated versions of Western textbooks. American professors came for weeks at a time to teach econometrics. Chinese institutions invited a succession of Western economists to give talks and then sifted through their ideas for those that



Where paths cross

From another world come Ahmed, the pampered, British-passport-holding crusader who returns to Lagos to start a muckraking newspaper after a decade as a banker in London, and Chief Sandayo, the minister of education, on the run from Abuja with \$10m in his suitcase. These worlds—rich and poor, urban and rural, privileged and powerless, Muslim and Christian, Igbo and Yoruba—collide to spectacular effect as their paths cross and power shifts hands in surprising and unexpected ways, and then does so again, and again. It is an unlikely plot, but Ms Onuzo pulls it off, revealing the fault lines in her country’s society—or indeed those of any half-formed democracy. Though drenched in Lagosian atmosphere, the book wears its Nigerian setting lightly: it is clearly the work of a pan-African and an internationalist—and is all the better for it.

were actually relevant to China.

The Chinese were most receptive to economists who themselves hailed from planned economies and understood their flaws but also knew that sudden changes were impractical. Ota Sik, from Czechoslovakia, inspired a phased-in pricing strategy in the early 1980s, whereby China gave enterprises ever more control over setting prices. The biggest star was Janos Kornai, a Hungarian economist who moved to Harvard after writing a seminal book in which he identified shortage as the chronic problem of socialism. What came to be called “Kornai fever” gripped the study of economics in China in the late 1980s, and his ►►

► book sold more than 100,000 copies.

The World Bank also had a big hand in China's take-off. The bank has a tainted reputation from that era, when it was seen as pushing a "Washington consensus" agenda of liberalisation that harmed Latin America. Much less attention is paid to its subtler positions in China in the 1980s. It carried out two major studies of the economy (the first of their kind), became China's largest source of foreign capital and, responding to Chinese requests, provided reams of useful policy advice.

Mr Gewirtz's book does not attempt to provide a definitive account of China's economic rise. It dwells in the world of ideas, tracing the arc of debates. Little attention is paid to what was actually hap-

pening on factory floors or in farm fields. But it is still a gripping read, highlighting what was little short of a revolution in China's economic thought.

Reading the book today, it is tempting to conclude that China is ignoring a basic lesson from its success: that being open to foreign ideas served it so well. Under Xi Jinping, officials rail against "Western values". Yet there is also a less gloomy conclusion. China's path has never been linear: reformists and conservatives have constantly jostled for the upper hand. But voices for openness have ultimately prevailed. And the gains that China has made in its understanding of economics and, more fundamentally, in the lives of its people will not be easily undone. ■

a Basel firm that also specialises in museums, completed 1111 Lincoln Road in 2010. A ziggurat of bare concrete linked by precipitous ramps, it provides accommodation for a series of art-crowd-friendly shops on the ground floor and a home for the developer, Robert Wennett, on the roof. This giddy stack of concrete cards set a benchmark for audacity, its upper deck providing stunning views and one of the most sought-after party spaces during Art Basel Miami Beach. From this example, the high-end car park became firmly established.

In November, as part of a new six-block development in the mid-Beach area, Alan Faena, an Argentine developer, revealed his parking garage (pictured). It boasts a glazed side elevation that exposes the robotic car elevator, which installs and retrieves cars from closely stacked shelves: a preparation for the dance performances in the Faena Forum arts centre to which it is appended. The car park actually only provides room for around 100 cars (though there are 300 subterranean parking places beneath the development). Yet still Mr Faena felt that the development needed an above-ground car park, to be "a statement". He had his designed, like the adjacent arts centre, by OMA, the fashionable firm founded by Rem Koolhaas.

Soon the designer car park will breach the borders of the Beach into the wider metropolitan area. Later this year in downtown Miami, Terence Riley, a former curator at New York's Museum of Modern Art, will open an 800-car garage that will be clad in a crazy collage of different façades designed by five of the world's trendiest practices. Although Miami has no more cars per person than the rest of America, it is still hugely car-dependent. The competition among developers to build the most extravagant or most striking take on an otherwise dull building is typical of Miami's peculiarly intimate glamour. ■

Architecture

Pile 'em in style

The most exciting architecture in Miami Beach is car parks

CAR parks are rarely well-designed. Even more rarely do they amount to "design": something to enjoy on a purely aesthetic level. However, in Miami Beach, Florida, the car park has become not just a building type that is visually pleasing, but something else entirely: a set piece that offers architects the chance to show off.

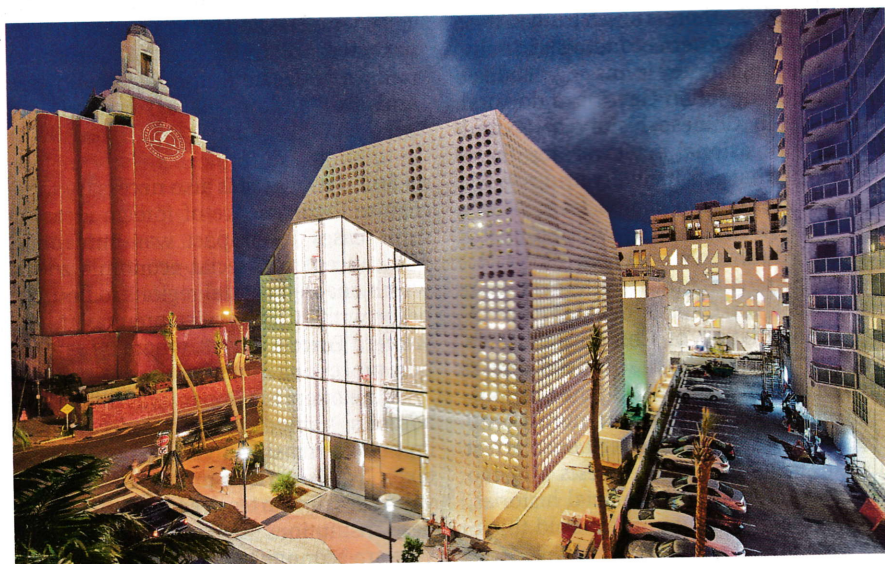
Perhaps because the city has expanded rapidly as a travel destination, its new hotels are invariably disappointing dumb citadels of glass and steel that dominate the city's charming old art-deco look apparently on purpose. Most galleries and museums are soulless, too, the glamorous veranda of the Pérez Art Museum notwithstanding. Miami is largely built on sand or swamp and has a high water-table, making subterranean parking expensive; building above ground is a better option.

The first building to turn this inconvenience into a design opportunity was the evocatively titled Ballet Valet. Arquitectonica, a local firm, had established itself in the 1980s with a series of brash, colourful apartment blocks that were immediately snapped up as sets for "Miami Vice", a television series, and "Scarface", a Cuban gangster epic. Asked in the following decade to create a car park that would add something to a block of boutique shops, Arquitectonica adapted its garish palate to the more sensitive 1990s by wrapping the building in a fibreglass mesh with an irrigation system, and filling it with indigenous clusias and sea lettuce, which ran riot.

Ballet Valet might have remained a one-off were it not for the arrival of Art Basel in Miami Beach. When one of the largest art

fairs in Europe was seeking to expand into America it made an inspired choice. Art was popular there, both among the American celebrity set, who had taken to Miami Beach as a place to party, and among the wealthy Latin Americans who saw the city as both their home and their financial base in America. There were only a handful of galleries, however. Entering into the art-led regeneration of Miami Beach, the car parks are in many ways monuments to the success of that relationship, creating spaces that enable commerce and art to exist side by side.

Car parks put developers at the centre of upcoming areas. Herzog and de Meuron,



Starchitects and their car parkitecture