

Proletarian



Workers must refuse to be intimidated by the barrage of lying propaganda that fills Britain's corporate media. It is the capitalists' job to try to stop us from taking power and building a socialist society; it is our job to do it anyway!



Russia pledges to restore Soviet-era relations with Africa

World



Russia pulls out of Ukraine grain deal, turns its face to Africa

The recent Russia-Africa summit has set the stage for a new flowering of anti-imperialist relations.

In July 2022, it was announced that Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the United Nations had come to an understanding whereby Russia would ensure Ukraine's continued export of grain and fertiliser. At the same time, all restrictions on the export of Russian agricultural products and fertilisers to countries in need would also be lifted.

To allow payment to be taken for this exported grain, it was agreed that the Russian Agricultural Bank would be reconnected to the Swift payment system, Russian grain-carrying ships would no longer be blocked from European Union ports, and restrictions on the supply of agricultural machinery and spare parts to Russia would be lifted.

All this was agreed in order that grain could reach the countries where it was desperately needed. Had it been implemented, the arrangement held out the prospect that the impending famine threatening north Africa could be mitigated and prices in many hard-pressed countries could be

brought down.

In the year that has passed since the agreement was made, 33 million tonnes of grain did indeed leave Ukraine's ports. The British government is claiming that 61 percent of that went to low or middle-income countries, but Russia has said that the proportion of the grain that went to the very poorest countries was less than 4 percent.

The World Food Programme bought 750,000 tonnes of it and sent it straight off to countries like Ethiopia and Sudan, but much of the rest actually ended up in the European Union.

There was one really big problem with the 'grain deal', however. Whilst Russia stuck rigidly to its side of the agreement, Ukraine and its western backers reverted at once to Minsk-mode, stonewalling and doing nothing to meet their reciprocal obligations.

Indeed, far from doing as promised, the Ukrainians have been using the 'grain ships' to smuggle arms into Ukraine

without Russia seeing them arrive.

Despite all this, the Russians agreed on *three* occasions to extend the deal, but with a year gone by and not the faintest glimmer of cooperation from the Kiev junta, they have now called time, resuming bombardment of Odessa and other Black Sea ports.

Grain to Africa

Russia has not given up trying to find a way to get grain to where it is most needed, however. President Vladimir Putin has told African leaders that they will get Russian grain, and that for many countries it will be free. "Our country is capable of replacing Ukrainian grain on a commercial and a gratuitous basis," he said, adding that "continuing the grain deal in its current form had lost all sense".

At the second Russia-Africa summit, held in St Petersburg on 27-28 July, representatives from 49 African countries listened as the Russian president promised to send free grain to six African nations in dire need (Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Mali, Somalia, the Central African Republic and Eritrea) and made a point of celebrating the

"joint determination to counter neocolonialism, the practice of applying illegitimate sanctions and attempts to undermine traditional moral values".

At the summit, President Putin recalled the Soviet Union's policy of supporting African liberation and development – by offering free university education to African students, by building industrial infrastructure, by sharing technological knowledge and more – and pledged that from now on *Russia would return* to that fraternal policy of assistance and support, from which it had been a mistake to depart.

"Getting your flag is not enough," said the Russian president, referring to the formal independence won by African countries in the 20th century. "It's obvious. Maintaining the monopoly of some countries in the fields of finance, technology and food is unacceptable. We need to fight this.

"And of course many people here know that the USSR and Russia never proceeded from the fact that it was necessary to buy only raw materials from Africa. How many enterprises, power plants, steel mills the Soviet Union built in Africa. We must return to this ► **page 4**

Ukraine war



Why is Britain so set on escalating the war in Ukraine?

Tanks, depleted uranium shells, long-range missiles, F16s ... hardly a week goes by without some news of how Britain is upping the ante again.

The recent announcement that Rishi Sunak's government would be providing first depleted uranium shells to Ukraine and then Storm Shadow long-range missiles represent two of the latest of examples of the British government's consistent and active efforts to escalate the war in Ukraine. It is doing so with zero concern for the lives of British workers and even less for those of Ukrainians.

Reckless and criminal escalation

This was demonstrated very clearly when the Ukrainian military stored the aforementioned depleted uranium shells in a large ammunition depot near the town of Khmelnytsky. When Russian armed forces blew up this arms store, a cloud of radiation was dispersed across the town, posing both immediate and long-term health risks to everyone resident or present in the area.

Not for nothing did the Russian foreign ministry warn the Sunak government *not* to provide such weapons to its Ukrainian proxies. Russian armed forces are not using such weapons in Ukraine themselves, knowing well the health risks they pose.

Russia had previously warned very strongly against the use of such weapons: "If Kiev is supplied with such shells for Nato heavy military equipment, we will consider this as the use of dirty nuclear bombs against Russia with all the ensuing consequences," a statement said. (Reference)

The cancer epidemics in parts of Serbia and Iraq following Nato's widespread use of depleted uranium munitions there are just two of the many war crimes perpetrated by British and US forces in their wars of plunder that are carefully ignored by British and US establishment politicians, journalists, lawyers and scientists.

How far across Ukraine and neighbouring countries this radiation and its effects might spread is at this time unknown. Nor can we yet know how Ukraine's food exports will be affected. In all likelihood, no meaningful effort will be made to find out by our self-identifying 'defenders of human rights'.

Sanctions war has failed

These latest reckless escalations by British imperialism come hard on the heels of bitter admissions carried in the Spectator and the Telegraph that the "shock and awe" sanctions war that was supposed to "reduce the rouble to rubble", in the words of US president Joe Biden, has been an abject failure. The aggressive western wagers of this economic war had confidently expected to bring about the collapse of the Russian economy, triggering either a mass uprising by a hungry and unemployed populace or some other political crisis that could result in the long dreamt-of regime change in Moscow.

But, owing to the preparations the Russian government has been making since 2014, the severity of the sanctions regime has been mitigated both by increased state intervention in the Russian economy and by redirecting the country's trade flows eastwards – in particular to China, Iran and India. The workers and economies that are being destroyed by the sanctions are not those of Russia but of the west, most specifically those of the European Union and Britain, where residents and industry alike have been suddenly cut off from the cheap and reliable flow of Russian oil and gas on which they have depended for decades.

Now, having failed to defeat the Russians either economically or militarily, the imperialists are getting desperate.

The aim of the war in Ukraine, from the perspective of US imperialism, is to destabilise Russia itself and, ultimately, to secure regime change (ie, the installation of a client regime in place of an independent one) and, ideally, the fragmentation of the country. This is all in order that the USA and its junior partners in Europe can seize full, unrestricted control of Russia's immense natural resources.

With the global overproduction crisis deepening every day, the contradictions of the imperialist economic system are becoming ever more apparent. US imperialism, mired in a mountain of bad debt, has reached the point where it is not only seeing long-term stagnation at home but is also losing control over markets overseas that it has long sought to dominate by means of its economic, technological and military might.

Meanwhile, African nations are increasingly trading with China and turning to Russia for energy and security ► **page 4**

Ukraine war

British escalation

◀ **page 3** partnerships, thus further deepening the contradictions faced by US imperialism and forcing it down the road of trying to remove both the Putin-led government in Moscow and the Communist party (CPC) in China. The removal of these two rival centres of power, which are working increasingly closely together, is necessary for US imperialism if it is going to succeed in 'solving' its crisis via the ruin of its opponents and the destruction of the opportunities for independent development that they are offering to the oppressed countries via Brics, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) etc.

Decline and decay of British imperialism

British imperialism, likewise mired in crisis and tied hand and foot to the US imperialist bandwagon, is equally desperate for these plans to be brought to fruition, hence its reckless escalation of the war in Ukraine by supplying long-range missiles and depleted uranium munitions. The British ruling class has played a subservient role to US imperialism since at least 1956, when it failed to win its war to bring down Abdul Nasser's anti-imperialist pan-Arabist Egypt.

The decay of British imperialism actually has its origins ever earlier than this. In fact, even at the highest point of the development of British capitalism, the seeds of its own terminal crisis had already been sown. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels pointed out in Capital Volume 2, there is a tendency inherent within the system for capitalists not only to maximise profitability at all costs but to actually cut out commodity production altogether if they possibly can.

"The process of production

appears merely as an unavoidable intermediate link, as a necessary evil for the sake of money-making. All nations with a capitalist mode of production are therefore seized periodically by a feverish attempt to make money without the intervention of the process of production." (Chapter 1, 1885)

Marx identified a tendency that would be explored and fleshed out by VI Lenin in his work Imperialism the Highest Stage of Capitalism. Written in 1916, at the height of the first world war, Lenin's examination of the development of imperialism included an analysis of the ongoing deindustrialisation of Britain. He showed how the development of imperialism was linked to the declining profitability of commodity production for the home market in Britain in the latter part of the 19th century.

At this point, British capitalists were able to realise far greater profits by exporting their capital to the colonised nations, where resources and land were cheaper and where labour could be exploited in a far more profitable fashion (ie, with even greater brutality). This brought the British ruling class into conflict with other imperialist powers, mainly the newly unified Germany. The competition for markets, resources and hyper-exploitable sources of labour led (ultimately) to the mass slaughter of World War 1.

As a result of the war, however, the British ruling class was much weakened, and it ultimately failed to restore its position as the overwhelmingly dominant power in the world, partly because it had heav-

ily indebted itself to the rising power of US imperialism during the course of the war.

It was only after World War 2 though that the crisis of British imperialism was fully realised. Britain began to lose control of its colonial possessions (starting with India) and faced the reality of having to depend upon US imperialism for economic and military support both for reconstruction at home and for exploitation of the oppressed nations abroad.

A faction within the British ruling class tried to resist this subordination to the USA, but it was decisively defeated in 1956, partly due to the anti-imperialist struggles of the Egyptians and also because the US ruling class would not tolerate

what it regarded as its British junior partner operating without its consent. Following the Suez debacle, the British ruling class realised it had little

choice but to fall in line behind the USA if it wished to continue to operate in the markets it still dominated abroad, even after being forced to give up direct control of most of its empire.

In order to maintain their profits, Britain's financiers need to be able to move capital anywhere in the world. They require all barriers to this to be knocked down, and, since WW2, the USA is the only imperialist country with the global economic and military power to be able to do this. The state of British imperialism is one of profound and multiple crises: it has undergone a longer decay and is much more vulnerable than the USA is.

The fortunes of the impe-

rialist powers ultimately rest on convincing the oppressed and developing nations of the world that they have to accept the terms dictated by countries like Britain if they want to escape being put under an economic siege or subjected to military attack.

Anti-imperialist bloc cutting the ground from beneath the imperialists' feet

Today, the economic fortunes of British imperialism are entirely tied to US economic and military power. The British ruling class has been cutting its own armed forces down for many years now, so it depends ever more heavily upon the USA to facilitate the ability of British finance capital to keep on plundering the world.

The British state may spend a large amount of defence, but it does not maintain the kind of forces that would be capable of taking on the Russian or Chinese armies for more than a few days. What Britain's armed forces have specialised in since their failure in the Iraq war is in waging wars by proxy, training and directing jihadists in Libya, mercenaries in Yemen and fascists in Ukraine to do the heavy lifting while they remain in the shadows – advising, directing and facilitating.

If Nato's fascistic Banderite forces in Ukraine lose their war with the Russian Federation, which they show every sign of doing in the near future, this will be a defeat for US imperialism of an even greater magnitude than its humiliating retreat from Afghanistan in 2021. Many nations that are currently dominated by British and US imperialism will see the defeat of the Nato-aligned forces in Ukraine as being a clear sign that the US-led imperialist bloc has been fatally weakened.

Ukraine war

This in turn will undermine British imperialism's ability to continue to exploit countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia. If US imperialism decays or collapses entirely, the British ruling class will be fatally weakened as well, not only in terms of the markets and resources it seeks to control overseas, but also in its ability to contain the class contradictions within Britain society itself.

This is why the British ruling class is desperate to secure the destruction of the Russian and Chinese governments. Because British imperialism needs to ransack huge areas of the world if it is to try and resolve the deep crisis in which it is enmeshed, and the anti-imperialist governments of Russia and China are standing in the way of that goal.

That is how we must understand Sunak's declaration at the recent G7 meeting in Hiroshima that China is "the biggest challenge of our age to global security and prosperity".

Of course, Sunak was referring solely to the 'security and prosperity' of the class he represents – the class of billionaire owners of capital. All that will come to the majority of the world's workers from the strengthening of our exploiters is the prolongation of the existence of the system that keeps them immiserated, condemned for another generation and more to the miseries of unemployment, poverty, crisis and war.

Those of us who oppose British capitalism at home must learn this lesson: that there can be no victory over capitalism at home without also destroying British imperialism's ability to loot abroad. Only with the departure of this parasitic system can the British working class advance in solidarity with the workers of the world to a bright and fulfilling future.

As Ukraine bleeds, British defence minister looks to a new life

Those eagerly packing Ukrainians off to fight for Nato can tend their gardens and sleep well in their warm beds, impunity guaranteed.

The following article by Eva Roberts is reproduced from The Indicter with thanks.

The recent notice of resignation by the British defence minister Ben Wallace provides another insight into how impunity operates inside British imperialism. Mediocrities rising to positions of tremendous influence in the imperialist British parliamentary system are free to wreak unimaginable havoc upon the world, only to return to a cosy life, tending their vegetables.

Wallace will be able to water his cabbage patch almost certainly knowing that black markets in Europe are seizing British weapons in Ukraine, and passing them into the hands of killers for use against innocents, including very possibly Wallace's own people.

He can bake to his heart's content, knowing that residues of depleted uranium contained in shells he shipped to Ukraine can be ingested by mothers carrying unborn children.

But in his garden, all will be well. The soil will be pure. He can enjoy time with his loved ones and think about the Ukrainian homes where there are no sons at the breakfast table, no fathers, no husbands, no brothers. Their bodies are still rotting in muddy ditches in a faraway land Wallace once supplied with deadly weapons, funded by his own people whose cupboards were bare and who were pulling out their own teeth as a trip to the den-

tist cost too much.

Wallace no doubt will profit nicely from his memoirs, or from speaking at dinner parties of the rich and well-connected, or pursue a successful new career knowing that a generation of Ukrainians are shell-shocked, suicidal, deprived of childhood, or severely disabled, most likely limbless. From his comfy chair, enjoying tea and crumpets, he can watch the destruction of Ukraine through the Nato game of 'We might let you join our club if you kill enough Russians – but for now you must die for the right to join our club – and here are a few more weapons to keep you busy with that.'

Wallace can think about how his boss, Boris Johnson, pressured Ukraine to abort a peace settlement with Russia last spring and the human cost of that warmongering manoeuvre.

Those eagerly packing Ukrainians off to fight for the Nato dream know only too well the squalid cost to life their actions have caused. But they can tend their gardens and sleep well thank you in their warm beds, impunity guaranteed. Their titles are coming, and their bank accounts are fat. British imperialism rewards.

And those other mediocrities of Parliament, fearing the mention of peace as political suicide, and, kept in check by Nato's war-addicted corporate media hounds, are complicit in this bloodbath, the latest and most terrifying savagery of the British imperialist class.

Russia Africa

◀ page 2 practice."

The summit concluded with participants signing a joint declaration calling for "the establishment of a more just, balanced and stable multipolar world order, firmly opposing all types of international confrontation in the African continent".

'Turning its face towards Africa'

In March this year, the Peoples' Friendship University in Moscow (RUDN), founded in the Soviet Union in 1960, was given once again the name the Soviets had applied to it in 1961 – the Patrice Lumumba University, in honour of Congo's murdered liberation hero and short-lived prime minister.

During the summit, Oleg Ozerov, head of the Russia-Africa Partnership Forum secretariat announced the name-change, saying:

"We restored historical justice. This is an important symbolic gesture, an indicator that Russia is turning its face towards Africa.

"Russia remembers the heroes of Africa and fighters for national liberation. Not just Patrice Lumumba, but also Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Leopold Sedar Senghor and many others. Samora Machel, Ahmed Ben Bella, Gamal Abdel Nasser and all those who fought for national liberation, sometimes at the cost of their lives."

No wonder the imperialists are foaming at the mouth, and making every effort to confuse the world as to the nature of the relationship between Russia and Africa.

And no wonder either that anti-imperialist crowds across the continent are so often to be seen waving Russian flags.

Ukraine war



Who blew up the Kakhovka dam?

With Ukraine's 'offensive' failing, and the western psyop brigade keen to talk about everything except battlefield realities, it is not hard to see who benefits.

The collapse of Kakhovka dam (on the Dnieper river in the Kherson region that was recently reincorporated into Russia) and consequent release of a flood tide of water, swamping the area and causing great loss of life and widespread infrastructural damage, is the latest incident to be blamed on Russia by Washington and Kiev, as usual without a shred of evidence.

As with earlier sabotage of the Kerch bridge and the Nord Stream pipeline, the russophobic knee-jerk reaction from the west, blaming Moscow, was subsequently shown to be false, with the real culprits turning out to be Ukrainian terror outfits or Washington itself.

In the case of the bursting dam in Kakhovka, one explanation being put forward is that

repeated exposure to incoming shelling from the Ukrainian side weakened the dam's fabric, incrementally compromising its structure over a period of time. This is the view expressed by Kakhovka's mayor, Vladimir Leontiev, who explained that the dam's valves were destroyed.

The Financial Times, rowing in with the prevailing hysteria, has adopted a lofty moral tone, opining: "In a war that has produced countless acts of Russian barbarity, the destruction of the Kakhovka dam is one of the most egregious." (Editorial: Dam disaster complicates Ukraine's counteroffensive, 7 June 2023)

It would be interesting to hear from the FT just what it believes to be permissible or not in a war against fascism. What

would it make of the famous WW2 destruction of a key dam in the Ruhr valley, inspiring the popular Dam Busters movie? Was this "an egregious act of barbarism" committed by the British RAF? Or was it a necessary sacrifice, striking at the heart of Nazi steel, coal and armament production?

As an article in History Today reminded us: "An estimated 1,600 civilians and prisoners of war, including female slave labourers from Poland, Russia and Ukraine, drowned in the flooding. Even Wing Commander Guy Gibson, the famed leader of the Dambusters immortalised in the movie by matinee idol Richard Todd, later mused how 'the fact that people ... might drown had not occurred to us', and that 'no one likes mass slaughter and we did not like being the authors of it'.

"One German civilian, Elizabeth Muller, would later recount how she saw 'trees, roads, gardens' all swept away before her eyes, while a Rus-

sian PoW named Antonio Ivanovna reported how 'for two to three months we kept finding bodies - they had become fat and swollen with the water. It was awful.'" (Just how much of a strategic success was the Dambuster raid?, Sky History)

So much for western double-standards over what is and is not permissible in war.

But the fact remains that, as soon as we ask ourselves who benefits from this act, it becomes plain that there was no earthly reason for Russia to bomb infrastructure on its own territory - infrastructure that provides water, power and irrigation to its people - and to destroy the lives and livelihoods of its citizens into the bargain.

Russian defence minister General Sergei Shoigu has confirmed this view and placed the blame squarely on Ukraine, describing the Kiev junta's reasoning as follows:

"Tonight, the Kiev regime committed another terrorist crime: the Kakhovka hydroelectric station facilities were blown up, flooding a large area. The purpose of these actions is reportedly as follows.

"Having failed to succeed in the offensive operations, the enemy intends to redeploy the units and hardware from Kherson direction to its offensive area in order to strengthen its potential, significantly weakening its position in Kherson direction. The enemy has begun building defensive positions on the right bank of the Dnieper river, which indicates the intention to turn to defence there.

"In order to prevent Russia's offensive actions in this section of the front, the Kiev regime has carried out a sabotage, essentially a terrorist act, which has resulted in the flooding of significant areas and will have serious and ► page 8

Ukraine war



Ukraine: Nato slams the door

Vilnius summit was supposed to be a show of strength. Instead, it highlighted the weakness at the heart of the imperialist alliance.

When the Nato warmongers first began to prepare for their Lithuanian jamboree in July, hopes ran high amongst the credulous – especially those whose evaluation of the Ukraine war's likely outcome rested more on Hollywoodised western propaganda narratives than on troublesome facts about armies, artillery shells, air cover and the like.

Surely, with the long-awaited Ukrainian 'counteroffensive' finally under way, backed up by a seemingly unceasing stream of lethal weaponry pouring into Kiev's lap from all over Europe and with every western government parroting the solemn vow to 'Stand With Ukraine', Nato would now strike whilst the iron was hot and welcome Ukraine into the thieves' den to universal acclaim.

But by the time the thieves finally gathered in Vilnius on 11 and 12 July, it was glaringly obvious that there was precious

little to celebrate.

Failure is an orphan

The 'counteroffensive' on which the collective west had staked so much turned out to be a non-event, and when the smoke had cleared Nato stood revealed as a house radically divided against itself, with as many views on what to do with Ukraine as there were participants in the conference.

This uncertainty in direction for the alliance was reflected in its difficulty choosing a new leadership that can speak with a united voice.

Failing to pick a new frontman (or, even better, frontwoman), a reluctant-looking Jens Stoltenberg had to be hauled back in to serve a third term, in the forlorn hope that his 'safe pair of hands' will enable the bickering crew to muddle through the current crisis. (Britain's defence secretary Ben Wallace put his own

hat in the ring but was roundly rejected, leading to a string of bitter recriminations in the British media.)

The final communique from the assembled heads was a masterpiece of obfuscation and self-contradiction. While restating that Nato's ultimate goal is still to accept Ukraine into the club, it in the next breath declined to name the day when any such invitation *might* actually arrive, muttering that Kiev might get its invite (or just the bare promise of one) "when Allies agree and conditions are met".

Jam tomorrow, in fact.

Don't you know there's a war on?

A key 'condition', demanded by Washington, London and Berlin, is that Ukraine must not be in the middle of a war with Russia when the accession machinery creaks into motion.

Heaven forfend that Nato might be obliged by the terms of its constitution (Article 5) to come to the aid of one of its members! Clearly, the pros-

pect of committing themselves to full-scale open warfare with Russia and shifting the front line closer to home is not one that sits well with the imperialists just now.

In short, Nato will be happy to honour the promises it made to Ukraine back in 2008, just so long as they do not relate to the *actual war unfolding now* – a war promoted, armed and bankrolled by Nato. By all means, go ahead and prevail against Russia if you can, but if you cannot, don't come knocking at Nato's door and waving Article 5.

Pressure on Nato to deliver a precise and unambiguous roadmap towards accession came most sharply from Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic states, all controlled by proxy governments that are eager to nail down the USA on its airy promises of rewards for services rendered.

Meanwhile, neither Washington nor Berlin are keen to become *directly* bogged down in a war they cannot win, although they are happy to ► **page 8**

Ukraine war

Kakhovka dam

◀ **page 6** long-lasting environmental consequences.

“In addition, the release of water from the Dnieper hydroelectric station, according to available data, has been significantly increased, leading to even greater flooding of areas.

“This fact [Ukraine sending more water from the dam it controls upstream to worsen the flood in Kherson] proves that the large-scale diversion was planned in advance by the Kiev regime.” (Russian MoD statement, 6 June 2023)

With the Ukrainian army’s long-touted ‘spring’ offensive finally underway and spectacularly failing – with huge losses on every battlefield – the destruction of the dam, whether it was given a final push by yet another Ukrainian attack or simply succumbed to the build-up of pressure from previous bombing raids, has clear benefits for the imperialists and their proxies.

Indeed, right on cue, media and politicians all over the west are taking advantage of this fresh opportunity to spin Hollywood-esque ‘crazy madman Putin’ stories in their continuing psyop against their own people – and simultaneously to evade *discussing what is actually happening* on the battlefields.

Presumably the western authors of this crime are also hoping that finding the manpower and resources to aid civilians and repair the damage caused by the flood will weaken the Russian war effort. And perhaps the meting out of a nasty dose of collective punishment to the disobedient citizens of Crimea and Kherson is also providing a little balm to the wounded souls of the soon-to-be-losers in Washington, London and Kiev.

Join the communists

Not only do we need to campaign against the bad conditions and lack of prospects for working-class people in Britain today, but we need to work for a completely different type of society – one where people’s needs decide everything.

So many problems face this world: environmental catastrophe, poverty, disease, racism and war. They’ll never be solved while capitalism remains, but they could all be sorted if society was set up for the benefit of the majority rather than the private gain of a few billionaires.

The Communists refuse to be intimidated by the barrage of lying propaganda that fills Britain’s corporate media. It is the capitalists’ job to try to stop us from building a socialist society; it is our job to do it anyway!

Our aim is to revive revolutionary Marxism and popularise it amongst the broadest possible sections of our class. Combining knowledge with disciplined organisation is the key to success in the fight against capitalism.

Our membership is youthful, while our leadership is experienced. We may be small, but we are growing. We welcome anyone who is serious and committed to working for a socialist future.

Become a supporter at thecommunists.org



Nato Vilnius summit

◀ **page 7** keep throwing ‘disposable’ east Europeans into the trenches in the hopes that something might come along to rescue the whole endeavour if they can just keep the conflict going for long enough.

Imperialism has no permanent friends

Ukrainian puppet actor-president Volodymyr Zelensky and the fascist junta in Kiev have every reason to denounce Anglo-Saxon imperialism for its treacherous double-dealing.

The USA and Britain egged on the Maidan fascists, supported the pogroms in the Donbass, encouraged Kiev to tear up the Minsk accords, actively dissuaded Zelensky from finding an early resolution to the conflict, and throughout it all continued to pour weapons into the Ukraine.

It did all this, and then Nato turned around at the Vilnius conference and told Zelensky effectively: Sorry, you can’t join Nato because we notice you are in the middle of a war.

Or, as one commentator neatly summed it up: “Nato is now using the very war it has done everything to fuel as a pretext to stop Ukraine from joining the alliance”. (Nato isn’t defending Ukraine. It’s stabbing it in the back by Jonathan Cook, Middle East Eye, 14 July 2023)

The proxy ‘president’ recently dubbed by Scott Ritter as ‘Agent Zelensky’ will now take his place in the long and winding queue of jilted imperialist stooges, cast aside as surplus to requirements – like the sad turncoats helicoptering off the US embassy in Saigon and the collaborating translators and fixers stranded in Afghanistan as pet dogs caught the last plane out.

Ukraine war



What exactly is the Orange Order celebrating?

Why is a protestant militia, founded in 1795 to combat the influence of the Enlightenment and maintain colonial rule, still marching in Irish streets?

The following article by Patrick Murphy is reproduced from the *Irish News*, with thanks.

Today (1 July) marks the start of the marching month of July. It is sometimes called the mad month which, just like clockwork, sees bonfires in built-up areas, parades (and feeder parades), speeches and resolutions, banners and all the rest.

(The marching month is not to be confused with the marching season, which is one of only two seasons here. The other one is winter.)

So, what is the point of it all? While not challenging the Orange Order's right to exist, it appears reasonable to query what exactly it is celebrating and why.

In its own words, it commemorates two events. The first is William III replacing James II on the English throne. The order calls this the Glorious Revolution, claiming it "enshrined civil

and religious liberty for all".

The second is the Protestant Reformation, which began 173 years before the Battle of the Boyne.

The order's first claim is plainly wrong. On the second point, it appears to cherry-pick.

The 'Glorious Revolution' denied rather than enshrined civil and religious liberty for all. It introduced the Penal Laws. They discriminated against presbyterians and were designed to eradicate Catholicism. (The 1704 Popery Act aimed to "prevent the further growth of Popery in Ireland".)

Other laws included the banning of Irish in court proceedings, which was only rescinded last year.

You could argue that the Protestant ascendancy took these measures to protect their power in the way things were done in those days.

Good point, but why cele-

brate such injustice today and then claim it granted civil and religious liberty to all? After all, the 1701 Act of Settlement still bans Catholics from the British throne.

Do Orange Order members not know about the Penal Laws (the presbyterians among them should) or do they just pretend not to?

It would be similar to Catholics celebrating the Spanish Inquisition, which persecuted mainly Muslims and Jews from 1478 onwards for three centuries (hardly the sort of celebrations the BBC would broadcast).

The Orange Order's adherence to the Protestant Reformation is perhaps more reasonable, if rather unbalanced.

The Reformation did not really reach Ireland. In Europe, it was fuelled through radical ideas in universities, circulated by the first printing presses. Ireland had neither a university nor a printing press.

Protestantism gained only limited support among the Anglo-Irish and even less among the native Irish. Supporters of the Reformation arrived here

much later in the 16th and 17th centuries, during the Munster and Ulster plantations.

More significantly, the Reformation led to what is known as the Enlightenment (which began about 1685, five years before the Boyne) by challenging imposed authority and arguing that people should be able to influence their governments.

Here, the Enlightenment led to the formation of the United Irishmen. One of its founders, Belfast Presbyterian William Drennan, was inspired by "the restless power of reason".

However, the Orange Order today cherry-picks the religious fundamentalism of the Reformation, while largely ignoring its enlightening impact on wider society. While the United Irishmen were preaching reason, tolerance and inclusion in the 1790s, the Orange Order was founded *against* that trend in 1795 (more than 100 years after the Boyne).

It was formed following sectarian clashes in north Armagh. The ensuing sectarian pogrom drove an estimated 7,000 Catholics from the area. More than 100 years after 1690, the order was established as a Protestant militia to defend this expulsion. It has little connection with the Battle of the Boyne.

So if the Orange Order dropped its claim that it is celebrating civil and religious liberty for all, it could organise a Reformation Day instead. We could all join in because, whatever our religious views, the Reformation marked what was effectively the birth of modern rational and scientific thought.

We are not very good at rational or reasoned thought in this part of the world, so it would be nice to find a common starting ground – but we may have to wait until July is over.

Ireland



Landmark judgment finds murdered Irish teen was blameless

The wheels of justice? War crimes committed by the British occupiers in northern Ireland fifty years ago are only now being officially acknowledged.

This article is reproduced from Irish Republican News with thanks.

The family of a teenage boy killed by the British army in 1975 has welcomed an inquest judgment that found he was entirely innocent when he was the victim of a cold-blooded military execution.

Leo Norney was 17-years-old when he was shot dead by Lance Corporal John Ross MacKay.

Coroner Patrick McGurgan found it was likely that Mr Norney's killing was a "deliberate act" and that the other soldiers with Mr MacKay gave false accounts to cover up what happened.

He found that the now deceased Corporal MacKay went out that night to "waste someone", and Leo was the victim.

Following his death, the British army tried to claim that the teenager was one of two 'gunmen' who had opened fire on

one of their patrols. Lies were later spread about the shooting, and pressure put on the coroner's office to say there was 'gun residue' on the teenager's hands.

Following the shooting, Leo's body was taken to Springfield Road barracks, instead of the morgue, where the bones in his hands were shattered. The British army searched his parents' home five hours after the shooting - but failed to tell them their son was dead.

Within days of the shooting, Father Denis Faul published a damning account of the incident with eye witnesses' testimony, confirming the teenager had been stopped and searched by the same British soldiers just minutes before he was shot, and refuting claims he was armed.

While individual accountability is not now possible, the coroner found that other members of the British army patrol covered up MacKay's murderous actions.

However, he found that the evidence of 'M2', one of the soldiers on the patrol, who had told the inquest that MacKay wanted to kill someone that day, was *credible evidence*. He believed he was telling the truth.

In a scathing judgment, the coroner said MacKay should never have been allowed back into the British army having just completed a prison sentence for serious assault. He had been released only two months before Leo Norney's murder. The British army then put MacKay in charge of a patrol when he was a clear danger to the public.

In a heartbreaking moment for his family, the coroner pointed out that if MacKay had been thrown out of the army, Leo would still be alive.

Mr Norney's niece, Linda Norney, said that the British army could have recanted, but had maintained its lies about Leo for decades. She also stated her wish that other families of victims of the conflict would be given justice.

"Leo was only a boy of 17. He had just got out of a taxi and was going to meet his girl-

friend. Leo was not armed. He did not pose a threat to anyone. He was shot in cold blood, and his shooting was unjustified," she said.

"However, the British army did not just kill Leo. They also murdered his good name. Later that night, after the soldiers returned to their base, they concocted a false story which blackened Leo's name for almost 50 years.

"They said that Leo was a gunman and that Leo had opened fire on them. Today, that narrative has been exposed for the deceit and lies that it was, and Leo's good reputation has been restored.

"It is sad that it was necessary for my family to have to pursue this for so long, but the British army left our family with no alternative. Had they had the courage and moral decency to tell the truth in 1975, then this process would not have been necessary.

"Today my family fondly remembers Leo for what he was: an innocent, good-hearted, happy-go-lucky teenage boy.

"We also remember today Leo's parents; his father Francis died prematurely aged 50 due to the heartbreak he suffered by Leo's death, and his mother, Annie, who campaigned endlessly until her death to clear Leo's name. Thank you."

Ireland

The Norney family lawyer, Fearghal Shiels of Madden & Finucane, said the ruling showed that the inquest system was working to expose wrongful state killings, despite the efforts of the British government to stop it.

“This is another clear illustration that the inquest system continues to work for families seeking the truth as to how their loved ones died,” he said.

“It is an open and transparent process where documents are scrutinised and witnesses are publicly examined against all of the available independent and objective evidence.

“Today’s findings are not unique. It is the latest in a series of inquests in which unlawful state killings have been exposed and state cover-ups unraveled, and no one needs to look any further for the true reason why the British government is intent on pushing through legislation to end other similar inquests.”

Paul Butler of Relatives For Justice, who has supported the family for many years, added:

“This is a particularly damning set of findings about British army brutality. The plain fact is that the authorities knew almost immediately what the true facts of the case were. Yet they, along with the other British soldiers on the ground, covered up the truth, which resulted in decades of hardship for the Norney family.

“The west Belfast community knew that Leo was not armed despite what British soldiers said. They knew that they were not there to protect civilians. And these findings are precisely why the British government is stopping inquests through its amnesty bill. Because inquests now have the ability to deliver the truth and establish culpability.”

Neo-nazi Nato's Proxy War Against Russia



Neo-nazi Nato's Proxy War Against Russia



The conflict in Ukraine did not start with the launch of Russia’s special military operation (SMO) in February 2022; it started with the fascist ‘Maidan’ coup of 2014, and its roots go back through a century of imperialist meddling.

This collection tells the true story of the war: the motive forces driving it, and the aims of each side – a continuation of the policies they were pursuing before the outbreak of war.

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End internment of Irish republicans now

The wheels of justice? War crimes committed by Ireland’s British occupiers are finally being officially acknowledged 50 years later.

This article is reproduced from Irish Republican News with thanks.

Increasing numbers of Irish republicans are being detained without bail and with little prospect of facing trial. Members of the Saoradh leadership have now endured three years of ‘internment by remand’. The party is calling on all republicans and human rights groups to speak out about the mounting scandal.

The definition of ‘internment’ is the act of putting someone in prison for political reasons without legal due process. This is what is happening to republicans in the occupied six-counties today.

For decades, republicans throughout Ireland have suffered the effects of internment and imprisonment in various forms. Despite this, they have continued to stand firm and continue to resist the oppressor.

That being said, we again bear witness to the internment conveyor belt in action. Evidence is not needed. Saoradh members and Irish Republican Prisoners Welfare Association (IRPWA) activists are now facing a renewed campaign of internment by the occupier.

Remand is the new form of British internment and this is consistently being used to imprison Irish republicans, who are often locked up on spurious charges and held on remand for a number of years

– until charges are dropped or their cases fall apart.

It’s clear that the British state is pursuing a relentless strategy of jailing as many republicans as possible – a punitive policy aimed at taking activists away from their families and communities; out of sight and out of mind.

When republicans are targeted by the British occupation forces, backed by their political mouth pieces in Stormont, they can expect to be held for anything up to five years on remand in a British jail – away from their families, communities and comrades.

Many of these cases are built on sand and eventually collapse before trial – but not before those targeted have been held in jail for several years despite being innocent. No matter which way we look at it, it’s clear that this is a form of internment.

Saoradh is calling on all republicans, nationalists, and champions of human rights – as well as on the ever silent Catholic Church – to open their eyes, see what is happening in front of them, and speak out about it.

Saoradh and the IRPWA remain unified, committed and defiant. We will continue to stand against the British state and its use of internment under any guise.

It was wrong in 1971 and it’s wrong today.

End British internment!

Ukraine war



Stop the War's cowardly capitulation hides truth about Ukraine, stops workers organising

It is time we in Britain got off our knees and organised a mass movement of real opposition to the imperialist war drive.

RT reporter and CPGB-ML member Steve Sweeney sent this report live from Donbass.

Small numbers of antiwar activists took part in a national day of action organised by Britain's Stop the War coalition on 8 July which, while calling for 'peace' in Ukraine, rallied around a demand that would in reality lead to a bloodbath in Donbass.

The slogan 'Russian troops out' – which was the first to appear in the antiwar group's promotional material for the localised events – renders the rest of Stop the War's demands meaningless and is indistinct from the position of the British government, the Biden regime and Nato.

It is also resolutely opposed by the people of Donbass, who have suffered daily shelling by Ukrainian forces for the past nine years. Many of them have explained to me that if Russian forces were to leave the region, it would lead to an unthinkable massacre.

Donbass realities

I started writing this article

on my way back from a shelling in which two people – a man and a woman – had been killed in a Ukrainian attack on a shopping area in Donetsk city. The attack took place at a time when many would have been picking up last-minute groceries on their way home from work.

Just a few hours later, news filtered through of the partial destruction of a hospital in nearby Makeevka – one of *nine medical facilities* hit that day – leaving "a lot of casualties" according to staff there.

I visited the scene soon after the Ukrainian strike, speaking to traumatised health workers and local residents who have now been living with the impact of daily shelling for nearly a decade. While they want peace, the fear of Russian troops leaving them unprotected is very real.

Attacks such as these – designed for maximum impact – are not uncommon. They take place every day with western-supplied weapons and grad rockets terrorising the people of Donbass. Schools, market places, hospitals, homes, bus stops and workplaces are fre-

quently struck, while petrol mines litter the streets.

But most of the strikes on civilian areas are deliberately ignored by western media, which focus almost solely on Russian strikes. Yet while the people of Donbass have been subjected to shelling and killings since April 2014 after the US-backed Maidan coup, Stop the War have claimed in an open letter to prime minister Rishi Sunak that "the immediate cause of this disastrous war in Ukraine is Russia's invasion", which is patently untrue.

'Russian troops out'?

The call for a Russian withdrawal is particularly dangerous and reckless while tens of thousands gather ominously on the borders of Donbass after launching a counteroffensive with western-supplied weapons and military hardware, and just days before the opening of the Nato summit in Vilnius.

It begs the question: Russian troops out of where? Out of Donbass, where soldiers are holding defensive lines against forces that would carry out a massacre of Russian speakers? This is where Moscow's forces are concentrated, so presumably this is what Stop the War and its supporters are asking for.

So who else should leave? The communists who have also take up arms to defend the region? The local Donetsk people's militia, whose members are on the frontlines defending their homes and families?

The removal of defensive lines in Donbass would in all likelihood lead to a genocide of Russian speakers at the hands of Ukrainian forces. This is not merely hyperbole, as recent history has shown.

At least 14,000 people were

killed in Donbass before February 2022, the majority of them civilians and Russian speakers, but also including members of the Ukrainian armed forces. This figure has been accepted by Ukrainian foreign minister Dmitry Kuleba, who confirmed the death toll during a 2021 visit to Slovakia.

In Donetsk city, locals react with horror at the idea of Russian troops leaving the region.

"Do they want to kill us?" retail worker Natasha asked. "We waited for years for soldiers to come and help us. We were living in hell. You can't begin to understand what it was like."

Her partner and brother have both volunteered to defend the city. She is proud of them, but fears that their lives will be cut short as the battle intensifies against the Ukrainian counteroffensive.

"We used to live peacefully beside one another. Look, we still have Ukrainian shop signs, Ukrainian writing. We don't hate Ukrainians. But we are exhausted. We want this to end. But if Russian soldiers leave, we will die."

Retired engineer Vladimir agreed. He served in the military in his youth, attending university and working across both Russia and Ukraine, then part of the Soviet Union.

"Russian soldiers should have come earlier. We were being killed by Ukrainian nazis, you know them? Azov, Right Sector – the Banderites? Every day they are shooting [artillery fire] at us. Why? There are no soldiers here, just old people, women, children.

"Yes, we want peace. This is our hope. But there are thousands [of Ukrainian soldiers] wanting to come here and they say they will kill us, that we are not human. These people are given weapons by the west, we don't understand why."

Ukraine war

Tailing Labour – and British imperialism

The apparent lukewarm response to the call for localised antiwar action in Britain, with many of Stop the War's previously most active groups not even holding an event, is perhaps not surprising given the organisation's confused position over the Ukraine conflict.

In part it flows from the mistaken view that Russia is an imperialist country and that the conflict is being waged between two equally bad sides – a variation on the 'neither Washington or Moscow' line, which in reality always meant Washington

But the demand for Russian troops to leave Donbass is most likely a concession – and it's a major one at that – to the Labour-affiliated trade unions Stop the War is reliant on for financial and other support.

The trade unions themselves have adopted a disastrous position on Ukraine, immediately falling in line with the British ruling class, while the GMB has gone as far as to call for *increased* spending on arms manufacturing and for *more* weapons to be sent to Kiev.

The Labour party – which has always been a party of imperialism – has shut down any debate on the conflict, proscribing the Stop the War coalition while threatening MPs and others to prevent them criticising Nato.

Not one single Labour MP has challenged the party leadership on this, with all those who signed a Stop the War statement following the launch of Russia's military operation last February falling meekly into line and withdrawing their support.

But the Communist Party of Britain (CPB) – which religiously tails the Labour and trade union bureaucracy –

has done the same, going to great lengths to explain how it opposes "Putin's invasion", even plastering this line over promotional material during last year's disastrous electoral campaign.

The CPB even went so far as to call for United Nations 'peacekeepers' to be stationed in Ukraine to "protect communities from attack", while enthusiastically supporting the demand for 'Russian troops out'.

Two lines in the communist movement

Meanwhile, communists in Russia have been fighting on the frontline in Donbass, giving their lives to defend their homeland from neo-nazi militia and to prevent a genocide of Russian speakers.

In February last year, just ahead of the launch of Russia's military operation, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation called for an international antifascist front against the "Nato-led nazification of Ukraine". The party's appeal went largely ignored.

Italian trade unionist Enrico Fiorini expressed surprise at the position of Britain's so-called progressive movement while on a solidarity visit to Lugansk.

By contrast, Italy has seen mass protests and strikes organised around the slogan: 'Lower your guns, raise our wages,' and demanding withdrawal from Nato.

"We are against war," Fiorini said, explaining how workers had stopped planes from leaving Pisa airport after packages of humanitarian aid turned out in fact to be loaded with weapons and munitions bound for Ukraine.

"The government lied because workers would never accept sending arms to kill

people with. We are against this and we are against Nato's war," he added.

The country has become the world's sixth-largest arms manufacturer and military spending has increased from 1.4 percent of GDP to 2 percent of GDP, in line with Nato's demands.

At the same time, Italy has been plunged into a deep economic crisis, with spiralling inflation, wage stagnation and rising unemployment seeing the country slide into recession.

"We need more actions internationally," he continued. "Workers have the power to stop Nato's wars and we need to be united. The people here [Donbass] are Russian. They speak Russian, identify as Russian. Russian soldiers cannot leave here. It would be a massacre. We remember 2014."

While Britain's antiwar movement – backed by the Communist Party of Britain and the trade union bureaucracy – falls in behind their own ruling class, the people of Donbass continue to suffer daily shelling and attacks from Ukrainian forces.

Meaningful non-cooperation

It is a far cry from the events of 10 May 1920, when future Communist Party of Great Britain leader Harry Pollitt inspired the stevedores and dockers of east London as they refused to load munitions onto the Jolly George ship bound for Poland to wage war against revolutionary Russia.

"The strike on the SS Jolly George has given a new inspiration to the whole working-class movement," Pollitt said.

"On May 15th, the munitions are unloaded back onto the dock side, and on the side of one case is a very familiar

sticky-back, 'Hands Off Russia!' It is very small, but that day it was big enough to be read all over the world."

The lead shown by the workers – not all of whom were ardent Bolsheviks – was enough to seal the defeat of the British ruling class's plans to invade Russia. Militant action stopped the government in its tracks.

This pressure led the Trades Union Congress's parliamentary committee to threaten a national strike, with workers "ready to hold themselves to ... down tools" if the government pressed ahead with its plans for war.

It worked. Prime minister David Lloyd George's national coalition government was forced to give reassurances that it did not intend to attack Soviet Russia after all.

This spirit has been seen in subsequent actions over the years, including that of the Rolls Royce workers in Scotland, whose refusal to allow engine parts for fighter jets used in the US-backed coup against the democratically-elected Allende government in Chile was captured in the film *Nae Pasaran*.

Italian workers – and others, including those in Greece – have shown that militant action targeting the centres of war, the factories producing arms and the transport networks shipping deadly payloads can halt the wars waged by imperialism.

In Britain too, mass action by the working class can bring an end to the Ukraine conflict. But workers are being deceived by the leadership of the trade unions and the imperialist Labour party, and let down by the capitulation of what passes for an antiwar movement.

It is time to get off our knees.

British politics



Increasing state repression and the 'non-personing' of Nigel Farage

The targeting of such a pro-imperialist figure is a warning to all those who might engage in acts of dissent against the establishment.

Former United Kingdom Independence party (Ukip) leader Nigel Farage has revealed that the bank where he had kept his money since 1980 (Coult's) recently given him two months' notice of its intention to close all his accounts by the end of June.

Mr Farage made the announcement via a Twitter video on 4 July 2023, complaining that seven further banks had refused to open new accounts for him on application.

Farage isn't alone in suffering this apparent banking ban. In the same week, former Brexit party MEP Christina Jordan revealed that she had been subjected to the same treatment, as did Scottish pro-independence blogger Stuart Campbell. Farage says that members of his family have also been denied banking services.

In his video, Farage suggested that his targeting may be connected with the a European Union law that remains on the

British statute books. The law he was referring to is the legislation on 'politically exposed persons', which is supposed to apply to people who hold state or political office and are deemed to be at high risk of bribery or corruption – thus presenting a risk of unwitting collusion to any bank providing them with financial services.

The fact that neither Farage, Jordan or Campbell have ever held political office within the British state is unlikely to prevent this law being abused, so it is possible that it has indeed been used to provide some legal cover for a totally unjustified sanction, applied without a shred of due process, and which, in the modern world, has been described as 'non-personing'.

Meanwhile, further clues to the mystery may lie in some of the wild stories that have been circulating amongst bourgeois politicians in Britain regarding the role of Ukip and Farage during the Brexit referendum.

One such story was repeated in the House of Commons by Labour MP Chris Bryant, who accused Farage of receiving payments from the Russian government – an accusation Farage vehemently denies.

Such charges have become standard practice Britain and the USA, where political leaders have become so divorced from reality and from the masses that they are unable to deal honestly with any political reversal. From the unexpected electoral victory of Donald Trump to the unexpected loss of the Brexit referendum, the establishment schills in London and Washington are more comfortable conjuring fantastical conspiracy theories involving the hidden hand of the Kremlin than facing the reality of their defeat with eyes open.

Taken all in all, it seems that the most likely explanation for what has been done to Farage is that it is an act of vengeance being taken by the ruling elite in conjunction with the banks, all of whom (as Farage rightly pointed out) were bitterly opposed to Brexit.

This in turn indicates that the

impact of Brexit – which was in essence a working-class revolt against the British bourgeois political-media and cultural establishment – is still animating many members of the elite to the point of madness.

The desperate drive by both Tory prime minister Rishi Sunak and Labour leader Keir Starmer to *undo* Brexit and find a way to return Britain to the EU is motivated by British imperialism's need to remove all barriers in the way of capital flow, as well as to have unrestricted access to the continental labour pool.

This need is becoming ever more urgent as the economic crisis deepens, and explains the establishment's relentless hostility towards Brexit and all those who were prominently associated with it.

Former prime minister Boris Johnson, as establishment a politician as it is possible to be, has been forced out as an MP precisely because of the hatred many members of the ruling class have for role they feel he played during the referendum. While they were forced to put up with him for a while in order to properly dispose of Jeremy Corbyn, they were desperate to replace him with an establishment 'Yes man' like Rishi Sunak, and did so as soon as they were able.

But this is not enough for the ruling class, whose representatives are desperately trying to undo what they see as the damage done to their system during the years 2015-20. In the process, they are lashing out wildly at any prominent oppositional figurehead – even those who are as staunchly pro-imperialist as Farage and Johnson in Britain or Trump in the USA.

What we are witnessing, in fact, is a ruling class that has become painfully aware that it faces serious problems, but

British politics

which is unable to respond in a constructive way. All it has left to it in the face of the rising social crisis is greater repression and ever-more desperate attempts to stifle all dissent.

This is not a new phenomenon, but it is clearly reaching new heights. What we are seeing today is an extension, on a new level, of a process that has been going on for a very long time in Britain, forming a crucial part of the ruling class's war on workers' rights and organisation.

Margaret Thatcher used the banking system against the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) during the titanic miners' strike of 1984/5, confiscating its assets in some regions and sequestering them in others, forcing miners' leader Arthur Scargill and his comrades in the NUM leadership to drive round the country with carrier bags full of cash to keep struggling strikers from starvation.

This approach to crushing dissent was then formally enshrined in the plethora of anti-union legislation that was put in place by successive governments Tory and Labour governments, enabling the state to seize any union's funds that is deemed to have defied these laws.

Since the 1990s, we have also seen successive 'anti-terrorism' acts adopted in Britain, which stretch the definition of terrorism so far that it could be applied to almost anyone the government might wish to target.

When we add in the fact that the government's 'Prevent' programme seeks to turn all public sector workers into state spies whose information can lead to families being forcibly broken up and its members sent on 'deradicalisation' courses, we start to see that the British government has been engaged

in a widespread campaign of intimidation against its own population, almost all of whom it considers to be suspect in some way or another.

The criminalisation of dissent continued with the US and British campaign against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks, both of whom were summarily kicked off of all online payment platforms 13 years ago. This in turn was followed by the long-running attempt to deport Mr Assange to the USA on the most spurious of grounds for the crime of reporting important facts (imperialist war crimes) to the general public.

What becomes clear from all of this is that the notion that British citizens enjoy the right to free speech is a bad joke.

When the government has a definition of terrorism that is broad enough to encompass anything it likes, and an individual can be reported to the police agencies by their child's teacher, their landlord or their doctor, that cannot be regarded as anything other than a deeply repressive society.

All of which makes the government's attempts to demonise the DPRK, China or Russia for their supposed violations of free speech an absolutely appalling joke.

That the ever-increasing level of repression in Britain is no accident, and that it stretches back over so many decades, should also come as no surprise. British capitalism has been stuck in a series of crises going back to the 1960s. It obtained a brief breathing space for itself by attacking the working class in order to destroy the

most powerful and organised unions, such as the NUM, and by engaging in ever more brutal acts of imperialism after the collapse of the USSR in 1991.

But even as it gained some level of relative stability, this did not last long. By 2007, the crisis had returned in earnest, creating a deep depression that has continued to this day. This long depression has begun to hollow out the support of poor workers in Britain for the political system, and even of elements of the petty bourgeoisie, leading in turn to destabilising events like the election of Corbyn as Labour party leader (2015) and the establishment loss of the Brexit referendum (2016).

At each turn, the ruling class has responded by unleashing another wave of hysterical anti-worker propaganda and yet more repression – as well as by whipping up ever more strident hysteria against the biggest obstacles to its global plunder: Russia and China.

In such a reactionary atmosphere, communists must make it clear that we are totally opposed to these 'non-personing' sanctions being taken against anyone, from independent journalists like Julian Assange and Graham Phillips to right-wing demagogues like Nigel Farage. Such actions are clearly designed to intimidate the wider population and keep them in line, knowing as they do that without a bank account it is almost impossible to exist in a modern capitalist country.

Fifty years ago, large numbers of working-class people operated without one, still receiving their pay in weekly cash envelopes. Now, even if they are paid weekly, employers almost all use direct bank transfers, while utility providers expect their bills to be paid via direct debits or online transfers.

The ruling class knows this perfectly well, of course. By picking on someone as high profile as Farage, they are letting it be known that they have the power to target anyone who engages in any form of dissent at will – the modern equivalent of the old 'we know where you live', in fact.

The dangers inherent in such a situation to the working class are clear, and need to be highlighted. We must be careful not to sow any illusions in the potential of capitalist democracy to solve workers' problems, however.

Our ultimate goal is not to somehow 'return' to a slightly less repressive model of capitalist rule, but to help the working class understand that only a state freed from the domination of a minority exploiting class – only a socialist state – can guarantee real freedom, while also bringing real prosperity to all.

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World



Why does Russia now believe that Covid-19 was a US-created bioweapon?

Evidence released from secret biolabs in Ukraine reveals the deeper secret of imperialist attempts to create targeted biological weapons.

Western mainstream media reporting of chemical, biological and genetic experimentation, 'biosecurity' and bioweapons has become so integral to the information war that it is hard to disentangle fact from fiction, and truth from psychological operation, even for those with sound political instincts and a healthy scepticism.

Yet the war in Ukraine is shedding some vital light on the *global network of dual-use biological laboratories* that the US state, and its military-medical research-pharmaceutical axis, has been building and operating.

When the many sources of evidence are collated – ranging from data found on Hunter Biden's laptop to attacks on Latin-American crops, livestock, economies and national leaders, to the US-Ukrainian labs that have fallen into Russian hands during its special military operation – the systematic nature and sinister aims of the US biological programme are strikingly revealed.

Weaponising Covid-19

As the Covid pandemic unfolded, there were multiple accusations and counteraccusations regarding the origins of the virus: Covid was a bioweapon released deliberately by China, we were told. Or it was a consequence of natural transfection due to the unnatural proclivity of the Chinese to visit farmers' markets.

Or, there had been a lab leak from the Wuhan Institute of Virology, where experimentation into coronaviruses, including 'gain-of-function' research, is carried out – interestingly part-funded by the US company 'EcoHealth Alliance', which pursues such research, together with the US military and pharmaceutical companies, at sites all over the world.

As part of the broader anti-China propaganda war, these tropes were carried worldwide by western media and intelligence agencies.

The Chinese quite diplomatically but firmly pushed back against this propaganda, with

US president Donald Trump in turn threatening to cancel Chinese treasury bonds – that is the \$1.1tn of the USA's \$28tn national debt then held by China. (The Times, 4 March 2023)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) did not support this narrative and was promptly defunded by the USA.

In the context of escalating trade and military conflict with Russia and China, the narrative of the Wuhan lab leak is receiving another big push – although *evidence of Chinese culpability* is conspicuously absent from the web of assertion.

But gain-of-function research (enhancing virus transmissibility, replication, virulence, host range and immune evasion or drug and vaccine resistance) is quite clearly going on, and the prime movers behind this research are the Nato countries, in particular the USA. Weaponising pathogens, to be released in strategic locations as part of a multidimensional or 'hybrid' war on any nation that steps out of line with the hegemonic aims of Anglo-American imperialism and its allied and servant network of states, underscores this strategy.

Biological warfare

Biological agents have been used in warfare for centuries. During the 14th century, Mongol armies catapulted the infected corpses of plague victims over the walls of the besieged city of Caffa (Fedosia), in the Crimea, to try to force the surrender of the city's inhabitants.

But with the advent of modern capitalist imperialism, the wider extension and more intense nature of systems of exploitation extending over continents, combined with advancing scientific knowledge, have increased the frequency and potency of their use. What's more, there are numerous post-WW2 examples of US and British state experimentation on the prison population, the military, and even on their own civilian populations to study the spread of pathogens.

If British and US workers were considered fit subjects for death-by-biological-weapons testing, it is quite easy to accept the likelihood that the supremacist sociopaths who rule the imperialist world are engaging in experimentation upon the subject peoples, with the aim of maintaining their rule and the source of their vast superprofits.

In February 2022, during the first weeks of the Russian intervention against the US-installed fascist junta in Ukraine, the Russian government and military highlighted their findings that the USA had been operating some 26 *biolabs* in Ukraine. The information they supplied was initially dismissed by Nato politicians and the western mainstream press as "Russian subterfuge". (The Guardian, 3 February 2023)

"The Russian army has obtained documentary evidence confirming the Pentagon was involved in financing military-biological projects in Ukraine,

World

the chief of Russia's radiation, chemical and biological protection force, Igor Kirillov, has said.

"We believe that components of biological weapons were being created in Ukraine," Kirillov said. He demonstrated a document dated 6 March 2015 confirming 'the Pentagon's direct involvement in financing military biological experiments in Ukraine'.

"He stressed that it was standard practice to fund US 'sanitary' and 'epidemiological wellbeing' projects in third countries, including those in Africa and Asia, through national health service agencies." (Tass, 17 March 2022)

Hunter Biden's role

Moreover, these claims were substantiated by leaked emails from the laptop of Hunter Biden (US president Joe Biden's son), and were even admitted to by some mainstream papers.

The Daily Mail, for example, noted that "the commander of the Russian nuclear, biological and chemical protection forces claimed there was a 'scheme of interaction between US government agencies and Ukrainian biological objects' and pointed to the 'financing of such activities by structures close to the current US leadership, in particular the investment fund Rosemont Seneca, which is headed by Hunter Biden'.

"Emails from Hunter's abandoned laptop show he helped secure millions of dollars of funding for Metabiota, a Department of Defence contractor specialising in research on pandemic-causing diseases that could be used as bioweapons.

"And although Metabiota is ostensibly a medical data company, its vice-president emailed Hunter in 2014 de-

scribing how they could 'assert Ukraine's cultural and economic independence from Russia' – an unusual goal for a biotech firm." (25 March 2022)

Igor Kirillov also drew attention to the Bidens' connection to the bioweapons programme:

"Incoming material allowed us to trace the interaction scheme between US government agencies and the Ukrainian biolab," Kirillov said, adding that the involvement in financing these activities by structures close to current US leadership, in particular Hunter Biden's Rosemont Seneca investment fund, draws attention to itself.

"At the same time, a close relationship has been established between the fund and key contractors of the US military, including Metabiota, which alongside Black & Veatch, is one of the main suppliers of equipment for Pentagon biolaboratories around the world," Kirillov added." (Global Times, 25 March 2022)

BBC disinformation

The imperialist press corps, with the BBC at the forefront, was cranked into gear to delegitimise such revelations – or, in its own words, to 'fact-check' the accusations. It thus provided reams of articles and footage tailored to the carefully-crafted English consciousness, such as this:

"General Igor Kirillov said documents uncovered by the Russian military in Ukraine on 24 February – the day the Russian invasion started – 'show that the ministry of health of Ukraine has set the task of completely destroying bioagents in laboratories'.

"The USA provides technical support and, according to the US embassy in Ukraine, 'works with partner countries to counter the threat of outbreaks

(intentional, accidental or natural) of the world's most dangerous infectious diseases'.

"There is no evidence that they work to produce biological weapons. In January, the USA said its programme does the opposite and in fact aims to 'reduce the threat of biological weapons proliferation' ...

"There have been similar unsubstantiated claims by Russia in the past about US-backed biolabs operating in its neighbouring countries." (15 March 2022, our emphasis)

So don't worry, these labs are just medical facilities. The USA is just one of many bodies that funds them, out of goodwill, to 'modernise' the infrastructure and 'improve the health' of the people of Ukraine and the world. And anyway, they are not run by the USA but are under the control of Ukraine (like the Ukrainian army, government, foreign and domestic policy generally?!)

All these claims (by such 'unreliable sources' as the national governments of countries we don't like, including Syria, Iran, China and Russia) are clearly to be dismissed when weighed against such CIA experts as our man at the University of Maryland, who naturally has no bias!

Victoria Nuland's slip

Unfortunately, the minds of the Nato citizenry were further 'muddied up' on 8 March 2022, when Victoria Newland weighed in on the matter.

She was responding to an apparently unscripted question from fellow neoconservative Marco Rubio in the US Senate, and independent journalist Glen Greenwald has given a powerful description of the exchange between these two bastions of the imperialist establishment and its portent:

"Undersecretary of state Vic-

toria Nuland appeared before the Senate foreign relations committee. Senator Marco Rubio, hoping to debunk growing claims that there are chemical weapons labs in Ukraine, smugly asked Nuland:

"Does Ukraine have chemical or biological weapons?"

"Rubio undoubtedly expected a flat denial by Nuland, thus providing further 'proof' that such speculation is dastardly Fake News emanating from the Kremlin, the CCP and QAnon.

"Instead, Nuland did something completely uncharacteristic for her, for neocons, and for senior US foreign policy officials: for some reason, she told a version of the truth.

"Her answer visibly stunned Rubio, who – as soon as he realised the damage she was doing to the US messaging campaign by telling the truth – interrupted her and demanded that she instead affirm that if a biological attack were to occur, everyone should be 'a hundred percent sure' that it was Russia who did it. Grateful for the life raft, Nuland told Rubio he was right.

"But Rubio's clean-up act came too late. When asked whether Ukraine possesses 'chemical or biological weapons', Nuland did not deny this at all. She instead – with palpable pen-twirling discomfort and in halting speech, a glaring contrast to her normally cocky style of speaking in obfuscatory state department officialese – acknowledged:

"Uh, Ukraine has, uh, biological research facilities.' Any hope to depict such 'facilities' as benign or banal was immediately destroyed by the warning she quickly added: 'We are now in fact quite concerned that Russian troops, Russian forces, may be seeking to, uh, gain control of ► page 18

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Bio-warfare

◀ **page 17** [those labs], so we are working with the Ukraini-ahhhns [sic] on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach' ... [interruption by Senator Rubio].

"The only reason to be 'quite concerned' about these 'biological research facilities' falling into Russian hands is if they contain sophisticated materials that Russian scientists have not yet developed on their own and which could be used for nefarious purposes – ie, either *advanced biological weapons or dual-use 'research' that has the potential to be weaponised.*" (9 March 2022, our emphasis)

China's view

Zhao Lijian, spokesman for the foreign ministry of the People's Republic of China, was asked during a press conference – also on 8 March 2022 – to comment on the Ukrainian biolabs. His statement was far more balanced than anything to be found in scores of articles on the subject in the British press:

"Lately, US biological labs in Ukraine have indeed attracted much attention. According to reports, a large quantity of dangerous viruses are stored in these facilities. Russia has found during its military operations that the USA uses these facilities to conduct bio-military plans ...

"I would also like to stress that the biological-military activities of the USA in Ukraine are merely the tip of the iceberg. Using such pretexts as 'cooperating to reduce biological safety risks' and 'strengthening global public health', the USA has 336 biological labs in 30 countries under its control. Three hundred and thirty-six,

you heard me right. It also conducted many biological military activities at the Fort Detrick base at home.

"This has led to deeper concern of the international community. Once again we urge the USA to give a full account of its biological-military activities at home and abroad and subject itself to multilateral verification." (Our emphasis)

USA's dangerous gain-of-function research

Recent evidence has come to light that before the influential paper published by the scientific journal *Nature Medicine* on 17 March 2022, titled 'The proximal origin of SARS-CoV-2' – which came out conclusively in support of the conclusion that Covid was a naturally occurring disease – the authors themselves, all of whom were recipients of US NIH funding, were involved in conference calls and exchanges with Anthony Fauci, director of the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases and Patrick Vallance, the chief scientific adviser to the British government.

To an extent, this may be considered natural. But what was *not* made clear initially was that the majority of those involved in analysing the genomic sequence were themselves *ambivalent* in their opinions regarding the origins of the virus.

Many considered the presence of a 'furin-cleavage site' on the spike protein, which allowed the virus to bind to the AT-2 receptor in the human lung epithelium and enter the lung epithelial cells by phagocytosis, to be unusual. On this basis, several of the researchers had thought this might indicate a lab-based origin.

The transition from this ambivalent opinion to a strong position favouring natural transfection may be linked to

pressure from the US military and the careful guidance of Fauci – or may simply be the natural evolution of those scientists' opinions. (The Intercept, 19 January 2023)

If strong evidence comes to light that Covid-19 is indeed manmade, or was the project of some gain-of-function experimentation, then the US military-industrial complex stands out as the most likely responsible party.

USA the world's biggest terrorist

In the life-and-death struggle for the Nato imperialists' survival, no holds are barred. The readiness of Britain to supply depleted-Uranium-coated shells, along with its main battle tanks, to the Ukrainian puppet junta is but one contemporaneous example of its genocidal recklessness.

These DU munitions are notorious for ceding radioactivity to the battlefield that lasts long after the military engagement itself. Incidence of foetal deformity and cancers have been vastly elevated – and then information about them has been suppressed in western media and academic journals – in Nato theatres of war such as Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Lawless protectorates make perfect labs

The extensive network of US biolabs points to the larger goal: *the control and domination of the biological environment as a means of war.*

Many analysts rank cultured and genetically-engineered biological organisms as *the most dangerous of all existing weapons technologies*, with the potential for producing far more extensive and devastating effects on human populations than even fusion nuclear weapons.

In this context, it is useful to note the testimony of Amirbek Togusov, former deputy defence minister of Kazakhstan, who warned of the dangers of US bioweapons development:

"We are becoming experimental monkeys, and the unique territory [of former Soviet states in particular] is the Pentagon's natural testing ground for testing new viruses ...

"Major-General Togusov planned to make a presentation at a conference on the threat posed by US military biolabs in Central Asia, but could not, having fallen ill with the coronavirus. Amirbek Togusov gave his colleagues the text of his research.

"On 14 July 2020, the former deputy defence minister of Kazakhstan died from a coronavirus infection ...

"In 2000, the Pentagon was forced to admit that the secret programme 'Project-112' conducted bioweapons tests in Egypt, Liberia, south Korea and Japan. The test sites were Puerto Rico and Hawaii.

"In recent years, biotechnology has taken a step forward. Academician Aleksandr Spirin, in his article 'Basic science and problems of biological safety', wrote:

"The decoding of the human genome and the recent advances in molecular and cell biology have led to the possibility of creating biological weapons of the third "post-genomic" generation of the 21st century – genetic and other molecular weapons as advanced biological warfare.

"Today, there is a technology for creating a virus with specified capabilities, ie, "multipurpose" viruses with various functions ... For example, selectively disable only the brain, organs of vision, digestion, reproduction, and so on. Devel-

World

opment of genocidal biological weapons is underway.

“Now it is “possible” to target viruses only at carriers of distinctive genes – ie, certain races or ethnic groups ...” (Stalker Zone, 1 January 2022)

Ukraine war

Russia’s SMO has unearthed – literally – evidence that “the regime in Kiev had urgently eliminated traces of a US Department of Defence-funded military biological programme in Ukraine. Ukrainian laboratories’ staffers testified that on 24 February 2022 pathogens of plague, anthrax, tularemia, cholera and other deadly diseases were urgently eliminated.” (Tass, 24 March 2022)

A further update from General Kirillov on 4 August 2022 covered a wide variety of suspect medical and biological science practices that have come to light as a direct result of the SMO:

“The ministry of defence of the Russian Federation continues to analyse the military and biological activities of the USA and its allies in Ukraine and elsewhere in the world in the light of new information obtained in the liberated territories.

“Work continues on the study of biological samples from Ukrainian soldiers who have voluntarily laid down their arms. As we noted earlier, high concentrations of antibiotics were found in their blood, as well as immunological markers indicative of exposure to the renal syndrome and West Nile pathogens, which were being studied by the Pentagon as part of the Ukrainian UP-4 and UP-8 projects.” (Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation)

‘Racial’ targeting

“We have already informed you that more than 16,000

biological samples, including blood and serum samples, were taken from Ukraine to the USA, Georgia and European countries.

“Against the background of the US administration’s assurances that the genetic information obtained from Ukrainian citizens will be used ‘exclusively for peaceful purposes’, I would like to quote a statement by Jason Crow of the US House Intelligence Committee at the North American Security conference in July.

“Crow warned Americans about the dangers of giving their DNA to private companies for testing because: ‘there is a possibility that test results will be sold to third parties ... and the information obtained could be used to develop *biological weapons targeting specific groups ... or individuals*.’” (Ibid, our emphasis)

Mounting evidence

“In May 2022, Jeffrey Sachs – a leading expert in the respected medical journal *The Lancet* and professor at Columbia University, which is the leading academic institution for global biosecurity – told a conference in Spain that ‘the coronavirus was artificially created and is very likely to have been created using American advances in biotechnology’.

“According to our experts, this is evidenced by the uncharacteristic variability of the genovariants that cause different peaks in the incidence of coronaviruses, significant differences in lethality and contagiousness, uneven geographical distribution, and the unpredictable nature of the epidemic process as a whole. It appears that despite efforts to contain and isolate the disease, the pandemic is being *artificially fuelled by the introduction of new variants of the virus in a particular region*.

“We are considering the possibility that the US Agency for International Development (USAid) was involved in the emergence of the new coronavirus. *Since 2009, the agency has funded the Predict programme, which has investigated new species of coronaviruses by capturing bats that carry the viruses*. One of the contractors for the project was Metabiota, a company known for its military-biological activities in Ukraine.’

“Characteristically, in 2019 – before the first Covid-19 cases appeared – the US-based Johns Hopkins Institute hosted an exercise called ‘Event-201’, which practised dealing with an epidemic of a previously-unknown coronavirus, which, according to the legend of the exercise, was transmitted from bats to humans via an intermediate host, pigs. This is how the ‘Spanish flu’ virus, which killed tens of millions of people, became pandemic.

“The implementation of the Covid-19 scenario and USAid’s emergency wind-down of the Predict programme in 2019 *suggest the deliberate nature of the pandemic and US involvement in its emergence*.” (Ibid, our emphasis)

Systemic inhumanity

The USA, its secret state apparatus, its ruling-class neo-conservative elite, and the ruling cliques of its Republican and Democratic parties cannot be regarded as honest brokers, any more than can their military-industrial complex personnel, think-tanks, foundations, investment companies and the monopoly capitalists whose interests they relentlessly pursue.

In the profound and lasting words of Vladimir Lenin: “Imperialism seeks domination, not democracy”!

With the deepening global

economic crisis of overproduction, the rise of China and the advent of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine, the axis of global power is shifting away from the USA, and towards the anti-imperialist world. It is precisely in these circumstances that the militarists are working themselves into a frenzy, trying to protect their parasitic ‘paradise’.

The mounting evidence pointing at the dual-use nature of the US imperialists’ biological research, conducted at 336 biological labs in 30 countries under their control (and acting outside the jurisdiction of any state or regulatory mechanism, but under the close control and direction of the US financiers and their military-scientific-medical complex) and the connection of this research to outbreaks of viral and bacterial diseases – possibly including Covid-19 itself – as well as to attacks on crops, on economies and on ‘undesirable’ political leaders and opponents of US imperialism is mounting.

This weight of evidence clearly underlines the unethical and inhuman nature of the exploitative system of capitalism, and the supremacist mindset of the imperialist ruling classes.

We must exert all our efforts to dismantle this parasitic, decadent and moribund monopoly-capitalist order, as an urgent act in defence of the life and liberty of the working masses of all nations.

Social



Homeless charity workers on strike for decent wages

St Mungo's staff have suffered a 30 percent real-terms pay cut in the last ten years.

As at the time of writing, the workers at homelessness charity St Mungo's are entering their fourth week of strike action, fighting as so many workers across the country are doing to secure a wage rise that might offset the real-terms reduction they have suffered as a result of galloping inflation.

Their demand for a 10 percent wage increase was met by charity bosses with an insulting counteroffer of 1.75 percent. When this was roundly rejected, reps at Unite the union managed to nudge the employers' offer up slightly to ... 2.25 percent.

Not impressed? Neither were the workers. With a turnout of 76.5 percent, they voted 90.7 percent in favour of four weeks of strike action from 30 May to 26 June.

Executives rake it in while workers are impoverished

St Mungo's staff have thus indicated their determination to win some concession from their employers as the squeezing fingers of poverty bite, but what of their bosses? It may come as no surprise to our readers the charity's execu-

tives are taking home extremely generous packages, lining their pockets in stark contrast to those who actually carry out the daily work of the charity.

Expenditure on senior management salaries at St Mungo's has gone up by 385 percent in the last decade as the number of senior staff ballooned from seven to 32. The CEO's wage packet has risen during that time from £107,000 to £189,418 (a truly inflation-busting 77 percent increase since 2013). Those senior staff positions are stacked with former government or multinational employees. Ex-KPGM staffers (one of Britain's 'big four' accounting firm embroiled in fraud after fraud) have also found themselves in senior positions within the charity.

Current CEO Emma Haddad was recently employed as director general of asylum and protection in Priti Patel's Home Office. Hardly the obvious choice of caretaker for a homeless charity. Once again, we see the way in which supposedly 'charitable' organisations have become part and parcel of the capitalist system, thoroughly enmeshed within its state machinery and perpetu-

ating rather than alleviating the inequalities they purport to address.

Some of the more indoctrinated among us may cling onto the idea that such executives 'deserve' these astronomically higher rates of pay owing to the skills and experience they bring or the responsibilities they are expected to bear. While it seems a bit of a stretch to imagine that the directors of what is supposed to be a charitable enterprise are 'worth' ten times more than the hard-pressed frontline staff they are supposed to supervise, the actual evidence regarding this particular management coterie's effectiveness and responsibility is damning.

"With such a financier-heavy board and executive, you'd think that St Mungo's must at least fare better with money management, in line with the governance principle of decision-making, risk and control. However, the reason cited for not being able to afford frontline staff pay rises is that St Mungo's has supposedly lost around £12 million.

"Of course, they haven't phrased it quite like that – but that's the difference between their current claim to have below £10 million in cash, and the accounts published in December that acknowledged a £22

million cash balance and £13 million in reserves. So where has all the money gone?"

Inflation and wages

Discussing wage numbers in the abstract does little to convey what workers are really struggling for and does much to serve the employers. Pointing out that gaining a 10 percent increase to offset a 30 percent real-terms decrease since 2010 still means accepting a 20 percent wage cut, while much more illuminating, still doesn't convey the harsh realities of the workers' situation.

That 30 percent decrease (or 20 percent if the St Mungo's workers successfully get their 10 percent) isn't merely a decrease in the amount of money workers are handed at the end of a working week or month, it is a decrease in *their purchasing power*; a fall in their standard of living. That decrease can express itself either in their having to buy less of some things (quantitative) or in their being unable to afford something altogether (qualitative).

While quantitative reductions in workers' ability to buy necessities can lead to much hardship, once that decrease becomes qualitative, it can be devastating – even deadly.

A qualitative change might start with relatively bearable losses (why should we have to bear them?), such as not being able to go on holiday or not being able to replace worn clothing or damaged furniture. But all too soon these losses can become unbearable and life-changing: not being able to turn on the heating; not being able to afford food; homelessness.

Homelessness kills

Let a 2012 study by Crisis and the University of Sheffield speak:

Social

“From the records of deaths in England between 2001-09, 1,731 were identified as having been homeless people. Of these, 90 percent were male and 10 percent female, whereas the gender split of deaths of the adult general population is 48 percent male and 52 percent female.

“Homeless people are more likely to die young, with an average age of death of 47 years old and even lower for homeless women at 43, compared to 77 for the general population, 74 for men and 80 for women.

“At the ages of 16-24, homeless people are at least twice as likely to die as their housed contemporaries; for 25-34 year olds the ratio increases to four to five times, and at ages 35-44, to five to six times. Even though the ratio falls back as the population reaches middle age, homeless 45-54 year olds are still three to four times more likely to die than the general population, and 55-64 year olds one and a half to nearly three times.

“Drug and alcohol abuse are particularly common causes of death amongst the homeless population, accounting for just over a third of all deaths. Homeless people have seven to nine times the chance of dying from alcohol-related diseases and 20 times the chance of dying from drugs.

“Homeless men and women had similar mortality ratios for deaths due to alcohol, while for deaths due to drugs, men were 17 times, and women 13 times more likely to die than the general population. Men were also more likely to die from cardiovascular problems than women

“As these findings clearly indicate, being homeless is incredibly difficult both physically and mentally and has significant impacts on people’s

health and wellbeing. Homelessness leads to very premature mortality and increased mortality rates. Ultimately, homelessness kills.”

We would add: ‘homelessness kills needlessly’. Nearly a third of the deaths referred to in the report took place in London, a city where there were at least 89,508 unused homes in 2022 (out of a total of 676,304 across England). The number of people ‘seen’ rough sleeping in London that year was around 3,500. With 25 homes for every houseless person, any human-centric system would quickly marry up those wanting a home with a decent place to eat, sleep and be secure.

Yet we don’t live in such a system, but one which prioritises profit over human needs. Far from being able to solve the problem, the market system of allocating housing intensifies it. As crisis and poverty bite deeper, homelessness is an increasing scourge affecting the workers of Britain.

Data released on 28 April 2023 by the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (Chain), covering the first three months of this year, show that the total number of people seen sleeping rough in London increased from 2,714 people during the first quarter of 2022 to 3,107 people this year (a 14 percent increase). Of those, 1,490 were sleeping rough for the first time as compared with 1,296 people in the same period last year, a rise of 15 percent. The number of people considered to be living permanently on the streets was up to 376 from 363 from the same period the year before, while 1,270 people were seen to be intermittently sleeping rough, a rise of 17 percent.

This article isn’t intended as an in-depth analysis of homelessness under our present

conditions; these details are outlined in order to highlight the frontline, lifesaving nature of the work that the staff at homelessness charities perform. St Mungo’s alone supports 3,150 homeless people across the country.

While the capitalist state strips public services and privatises social housing, and while the cyclical overproduction crises (the real major factor of our cost of living crisis) dash more and more people against the rocks of poverty, the numbers of workers in desperate need of support will continue to soar – exacerbated by the impoverishment of the charity workers themselves!

It seems likely that we will soon be seeing homelessness charity workers needing help with homelessness, just as we are seeing increasing numbers of employed workers relying on food banks while they work harder and longer for less.

Capitalism has no answers

The two issues highlighted here, homelessness amidst an abundance of homes and the constant pressure of wages toward an absolute survival minimum isn’t a flaw of capitalism, it is a feature. This is how capitalism always has, and always will, function.

While the workers of Britain have no say over how housing is distributed, and the market is left to give or strip people of their homes depending on their ability to pay, our society will continue to be blighted by the obscenity of overcrowding, slum conditions and homelessness.

The only remedy for working people, in this as in so many other spheres of economic activity, is to remove housing from the capitalist marketplace, to remove its character as an investment vehicle for

speculation and rent extraction, and instead plan its allocation as a use-value (a home!) according to *need*.

Under conditions of capitalism, workers are duty-bound to struggle to defend their wages. Not to do so is to passively accept being forced into the gutter. If we struggle hard enough, we may even maintain our living standards at a level above the absolute minimum.

Even if we are successful in doing so for a time, however, the *proportion* of society’s wealth that is allotted to the workers who produced it will continue to decline. Thus our *relative* social position steadily declines even during those ‘better’ periods when we are able to maintain what on the face of things appears to be a fairly ‘decent’ standard of living.

Moreover, the periods when such a level has been attainable were always brief and now seem firmly relegated to the past. The ever-deepening overproduction crisis of the world capitalist system in which we are presently enmeshed is the worst the capitalist world has ever seen.

And it has plunged the lords of monopoly capital into an existential crisis, from which they are trying to escape by means of further pressing down on workers’ pay and conditions, as well as by means of wars that they hope will secure their ability to dominate and plunder the globe.

Every day we are being furnished with fresh proof of the words of Karl Marx, who wrote in 1865 that the time had come for workers to abandon their call for ‘A fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work!’ and struggle instead for the revolutionary attainment of the ‘Abolition of the wages system!’ (Value, Price and Profit)

Environment



Japan to release radioactive wastewater into the Pacific despite regional alarm

Atomic agency to approve Fukushima discharge amid allegations of bribes and widespread environmental concerns.

The Japanese government plans to pump more than one million tonnes of radioactive wastewater, trapped on site ever since the Fukushima disaster, straight into the Pacific Ocean.

In the teeth of impassioned pleas from south Korean fishermen fearful of losing their livelihoods and warnings from Greenpeace about the wider environmental implications, the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Authority) seems likely to give the plan the go ahead. (China urges Japanese govt, IAEA to respond to reports of 'donation' related to Fukushima water disposal by Xu Keyue, Global Times, 28 June 2023)

Science for hire

But south Korean media reports are now surfacing which throw doubt on the objectivity of the IAEA's final assessment report that has given Japan the green light. According to these reports, the Japanese government got hold of a draft copy of the report ahead of time and

badgered the IAEA to make substantive changes to its text, exerting undue influence on the final report's conclusion that releasing the water would be safe.

Then came the revelation on 21 June that the government had "made a political donation of more than €1m (\$1.1m) to the IAEA in order to resolve differences of opinion between the IAEA and third country experts conducting a review of the nuclear-contaminated water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant".

As a spokesperson for China's foreign ministry, Mao Ning, pointed out: "The Japanese government has the responsibility to provide a convincing explanation for the relevant media reports, and the IAEA secretariat should also respond to the matter." Mao also noted that "People have reason to question whether the conclusion of the final assessment report of the IAEA technical working group is fair and objective."

The Chinese spokesman expressed the hope that "the IAEA secretariat will adhere to the principles of objectivity, professionalism and impartiality, fully respect and adopt the opinions of experts from all sides of the technical working group, come up with an assessment report that can stand the test of science and history, and not endorse Japan's dumping plan ... The international community will wait and see."

Indeed, despite the constant assurances expressed by the Japanese government and by Tepco, the Japanese company assigned the task of distilling the wastewater, demands persist from all sides for an open process and a proper level of scientific scrutiny.

Concerns dismissed

China is at the forefront of these demands, with Wu Jianghao, China's ambassador to Japan, stating: "Japan should stop the plan to release the water into the sea, but seriously consult with the international community and consider a scientific, safe, transparent and convincing response." (Scientists say Fukushima water is safe, but radiation fears persist by Motoko Rich, New York Times, 4 July 2023)

Right on cue, Britain's Daily Telegraph condescendingly remarked in the last line of its own piece on the topic that "water containing tritium [a radioactive element] is routinely released from nuclear plants around the world, including in China", thus implying that the demands for greater transparency by Japan's neighbours are hypocritical, and not to be taken seriously.

China continues to speak for most of the world, however, when it urgently begs Japan not to take the flawed IAEA report as a "green light" for dumping its radioactive waste

into the ocean, for such an act cannot be undone and is likely to have disastrous effects for people and planet long into the future.

According to a Chinese foreign ministry official, the IAEA report "failed to fully reflect views from experts who participated in the review, and its conclusion was not shared by them all. The Chinese side regrets the hasty release of the report.

"Due to its limited mandate, the IAEA failed to review the justification and legitimacy of Japan's ocean discharge plan, to assess the long-term effectiveness of Japan's purification facility and corroborate the authenticity and accuracy of Japan's nuclear-contaminated water data. Therefore, the conclusion is largely limited and incomplete.

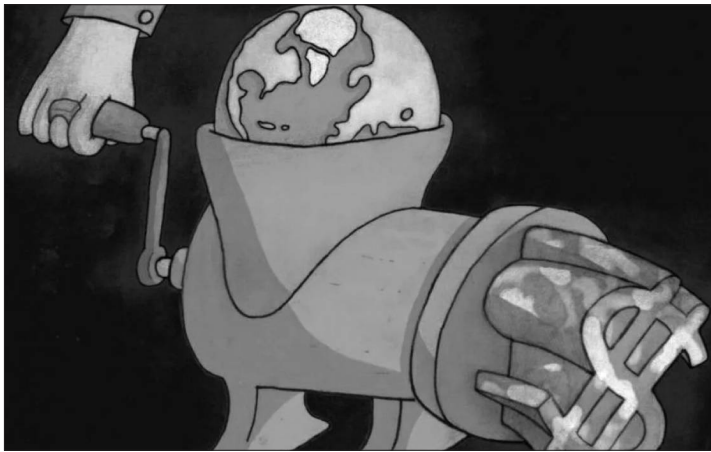
"Simply in order to save money, Japan has insisted on discharging nuclear-contaminated water into the sea in disregard of the concerns and opposition from the international community.

"It is using the Pacific Ocean as a sewer.

"No matter what the report says, it will not change the fact that Japan will release millions of tonnes of Fukushima nuclear-contaminated water into the Pacific Ocean in the next three decades.

"Will Japan's purification facility be effective in the long term? Can the international community be in- ▶ page 25

Environment



The biggest threat to the environment is the imperialist war machine

While lecturing workers about ‘consumer choices’, western environmental lobbies give a free pass to the planet’s real polluters.

As finance capital attempts to turn supposedly environmental carbon measurements into financial packages that can be traded and sold, ‘progressive’ capitalists like to pose as green evangelists. However, their pretended concern for the environment evaporates when confronted with the fact that it is the imperialist war machine itself that is the greatest polluter on the planet. (Why the Pentagon is the world’s biggest single greenhouse gas emitter by Ruqaiyah Zarook, Mother Jones, 7 October 2022)

For this gentry, the cardinal right of the imperialist west to plunder the world (and to chastise any country that prefers to take its own path of development – like Venezuela, Cuba, north Korea, China or Russia), takes precedence over even the most urgent environmental issues.

Hear the sainted Greta Thunberg blessing Nato’s guns and falsely blaming Russia for the sabotage of Kakhovka Dam: “This ecocide as a continuation

of Russia’s unprovoked full-scale invasion of Ukraine is yet another atrocity which leaves the world lost for words. Our eyes are once again on Russia who must be held accountable for their crimes.” (Greta Thunberg, Twitter, 8 June 2023)

Nor is Greta out of line with right-on green politics in general. In March this year, the Green Party of England and Wales voted to remove the party’s old commitment to quit Nato. It’s one thing to guilt-trip everyone over taking a plane to Marbella, but another thing entirely to get in the way of Nato’s insatiable thirst for aviation fuel – after all, that might actually impede British imperialism’s mission to ‘stand with Ukraine’ by hurling as many Ukrainians as possible to their deaths.

Depleted uranium to Ukraine courtesy of ‘green’ British government

To take just one example of the way that warmongering

imperialism pollutes the world without a care for the consequences, the British government recently announced that it had sent depleted uranium (DU) rounds to Nato’s infamously corrupt and fascistic stooge ‘government’ in Kiev.

One might think that previous experience would give our green-conscious rulers pause. After all, the use of DU in Nato’s criminal war against Yugoslavia turned Serbia into the cancer capital of Europe, while its use in the indiscriminate shelling of civilians in Fallujah shocked even hardened British military officers, as the Iraqi city was transformed into a nightmarish radiation hotspot.

Worse birth defects and at a higher rate have been registered in Fallujah than those that followed the USA’s dropping of the first nuclear bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945.

Both targeted civilians and targeting soldiers suffered the consequences of these war crimes. Tasked with cleaning out tanks coated in this noxious substance, the unlucky ones started dropping like flies. Needless to say, the Ministry of Defence’s chief concern was not the health of ‘our boys’, but how to avoid paying compensation to the bereaved families.

“Dyson cleaned tanks during the Gulf war in 1991 and later developed a rare cancer, passing away in 2008. An inquest jury found it was ‘more likely than not’ that depleted uranium had caused his death. The Ministry of Defence rejected the ruling and refused to pay his widow a pension for those who die from service.” (Depleted uranium: Courts accept cancer risk denied by army by Phil Miller, Declassified UK, 2 May 2023)

In fact, the MoD had known about these health issues for many years, but continued in its usual supremacist fashion

to expose British soldiers and civilian populations around the world to their lethal effects, while lying bare-facedly to all enquirers.

“I want to reassure our troops, civilian back-up and families that there is nothing to fear from this particular type of munition,” one senior officer told the press. “People must understand that when we act, we act with the interests of our troops and civilians very much in mind.” (British army knew of depleted uranium risk four years ago, NZ Herald, 10 January 2001)

So the British government sent the promised depleted uranium rounds to Ukraine, only to find that Russia, which no doubt has reliable informants across the country, was able to blow them up while they were still in the warehouse – in Khmelnytskyi, in fact, a town to the west of Kiev, hundreds of miles from the fighting.

A report on the Sputnik news website described the explosion at the Khmelnytskyi weapons silo (about which western media have been strangely silent) and detailed the various strands of evidence which pointed to its having contained the British DU shells:

“What we see is a massive explosion ... and reports of a spike in gamma radiation near the site. Uranium oxide is black, and the black plume moves north west slowly, the weather pattern is stable and the wind blows towards Poland.

“Polish EU detectors all show gamma radiation increases at the expected time of arrival of the plume. The EU detector system is shut down rapidly, but not before we have obtained data from several sites. The Poles provide a detector result that identified Bismuth as the cause of the increase, but do not go so far ▶ **page 25**

Social



Burden on students becoming unbearable as fresh rent hikes planned

Students are being milked like cash cows, while the vice-chancellors who facilitate this profiteering enjoy huge salaries and perks.

According to recent media reports, a large number of British universities – including many from the prestigious Russell group – are planning accommodation rent hikes of up to 19 percent in the coming academic year.

Despite coming as an unpleasant surprise to many, such a move is a continuation of a consistent trend towards higher and higher costs imposed on students for an education that is steadily deteriorating in quality, even as an increasing number of careers that used to provide on-the-job training now insist on at least one degree as a prerequisite for employment.

This has been the direction of travel ever since Tony Blair's Labour government expanded Britain's universities and introduced tuition fees, and the process has accelerated since, especially in the post-2008 era of deepening capitalist crisis.

Privatisation model: paying more for less

Whilst crippling tuition fees

tend to get the most attention, these are (for now) generally covered by government loans, repayment of which is deferred until the student has graduated and found a job. Accommodation fees, on the other hand, are invariably far higher than the meagre government 'maintenance loan' will cover – sometimes more than double the loan amount.

As a result, many students from poorer backgrounds are having to find full-time employment in menial, exploitative jobs in order to make ends meet – clearly having an adverse effect on every aspect of their studies.

Very often, the university in question does not even provide sufficient accommodation for all its students, who are left to the mercy of private landlords, incurring even higher costs. The standard of private student accommodation is notoriously bad, with mould and vermin rife, and it is often located in neighbourhoods with high rates of violent crime.

In Birmingham's Selly Oak

neighbourhood, for example, there are stories of students being mugged, sexually assaulted and stabbed.

Britain's modern business-focused universities have found an array of ways to extort from their students besides their eye-watering accommodation fees. These can include obliging the them to buy expensive coursebooks, charging well above market prices for amenities such as gym use or canteen food, or forcing students to sign up to rip-off prepaid 'meal plan' cards that 'refresh' weekly (ie, unspent money is lost each week).

With this shameless milking of students as cash cows, it is clear from the pay packets of university management that talk of universities being short of funds is utter nonsense. Many vice-chancellors earn salaries of half a million pounds a year and even have personal chauffeurs to drive them around.

During this author's time at Birmingham university, for example, the campus resembled a perpetual construction site, as the bonanza of fees extorted from students was spent on academically-useless vanity projects such as an onsite ho-

tel and various new buildings that may have looked pretty on the outside but provided very little space for study on the inside.

Education quality declining

Over the last three decades, Britain's universities have been steadily transformed from places of education and study to profit-taking machines for rich shareholders. This has been accompanied by a general degeneration of the university experience: outside of their coursework, students are encouraged to do very little other than go nightclubbing and drink themselves into a stupor.

In stark contrast to the propaganda about 'free speech' at universities, expression of any kind of politics that contradict the 'official' view of Britain's imperialist bourgeoisie is heavily policed and censored.

The increasing role of the profit motive in the running of educational institutions is often defended by free market advocates, who claim that promoting 'competition' will improve quality and allow students to 'shop around'. If we step outside of the libertarian Neverland, however, and into the real world, the modern university system more closely resembles a cartel of organised monopolists than a system of free competition – as evidenced by the fact that despite being nominally free to attract students by lowering their tuition fees, not a single university has ever charged a penny less than the maximum possible fee set by the government.

The commodification of university education and the subsequent decline in standards is just one part of the steady privatisation of Britain's public services in the conditions of

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capitalist overproduction crisis.

As existing avenues for profit dry up, new ones need to be found and old ones more intensely exploited.

This is an intrinsic feature of the decaying capitalist system.

It will not go away until that system is overthrown and replaced with a socialist one based on economic planning in the interest of the working masses. Incurable reformists, clinging to their belief that a 'left Labour' government will reverse this decay, are sadly deluded. Not only because of the imperialist nature of the Labour party, but because no party committed to working within the confines of the capitalist system can resolve the systemic contradictions that drive privatisation.

The establishment of high-quality, free, cradle-to-grave education systems in the former socialist nations of eastern Europe transformed the scientific and technical bases of those countries, as well as bringing meaning, culture and fulfilment to their people. Indeed, many alumni of socialist education systems are still proving invaluable in restored capitalist regimes – GDR-educated Angela Merkel, for instance, and Soviet-educated Vladimir Putin and his generals.

In this, as in so many other fields of social life, it is becoming ever clearer that there is no alternative to scientific socialism and socialist revolution if we really wish to solve workers' problems and provide a decent life to all.

The Drive to War Against Russia and China



Why do the US and British ruling classes seem so set on war with Russia and China?

What has the economic crisis of capitalism got to do with it?

Why should it be that Russia and China in particular inspire such belligerence? And what kind of antiwar movement do workers need to build if they wish to stop the juggernaut in its tracks?

Despite the urgency and importance of these questions, they are hardly discussed in what passes for the British working-class movement at present, but one thing is for certain: we cannot succeed in a task we have not even set ourselves.

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Fukushima

◀ **page 22** formed in a timely way when the discharged water exceeds the discharge limit?

What impact will the long-term accumulation and concentration of radionuclides bring to the marine environment, food safety and people's health? These are the questions that the IAEA report failed to answer.

"We once again urge the Japanese side to stop its ocean discharge plan, and earnestly dispose of the nuclear-contaminated water in a science-based, safe and transparent manner." (IAEA report should not be 'green light' for Japan's nuclear-contaminated water discharge, 4 July 2023)

Red to be green

As their tame corporate media line up to sweep these genuine and serious concerns aside and to reassure the public that there's 'nothing to see here', the environmental hypocrisy of the western monopolists who dominate the global capitalist world is once again on full display.

Clearly, only the defeat of the imperialist system and the founding of socialist economies in its place will enable humanity to take and carry out decisions based on need rather than greed. When that time comes there will be plenty of work to do to apply science, technology and ingenuity to the problems left behind by the ravaging monopoly-capitalist order.

For all those who are concerned that seriously beginning such work is urgent and overdue, we appeal to you: join the revolutionary movement and help speed forward the day when we can begin in earnest. You really do have to be red to be green.

War machine

◀ **page 23** as to formally state that it is (in case of later blow-back).

"One final piece of evidence. We see videos on the internet of the Ukrainians clearing up the explosion site using robot vehicles, not ordinary firemen. Why do they need robot vehicles? The last time we saw robot vehicles clearing up was in the ruins of Chernobyl and Fukushima." (Ukraine's depleted uranium blast: Europe on brink of 'environmental disaster', 19 May 2023)

The criminal recklessness of imperialism in using these weapons, and the way in which such behaviour is quietly tolerated or even cheered on by green lobby groups, furnishes but one example of how the western establishment's much-vaunted 'concern' for the environment stops conveniently at the line where the interests of the imperialist war/profit machine begin.

Diary dates

Celebrate October 1917

1.00pm, Sat 4 November

Join party and guest speakers from fraternal embassies in marking the 105th anniversary of this epoch-shaping event.

Bolivar Hall, 54 Grafton Way London, W1T 5DL

Wigan Diggers festival

10.30am, Sat 9 September

Believe Square, The Wiend Wigan, WN1 1PF

Burston School rally

10.30am, Sun 3 September

Diss Road, Burston IP22 4HS

Social

Malnutrition

◀ **page 28** “We see that the quality of our children’s diets is very poor. We see that across the wealth spectrum but particularly these very marked differences in healthy food consumption between the poorest and the richest children in the UK.”

She added that the low consumption of fruit and vegetables, but high consumption of ultra-processed foods meant that Britain was “reaching a crisis point in terms of the knock-on effect this is having on children as they develop, but also the lag that is then creating for later life”.

Obesity

Dr Gerada has said that the obesity epidemic is another indicator of malnutrition, with most children who are obese more likely to be vitamin D deficient “because they’re not getting the right calories”.

The biggest cause of avoidable death today in Britain is our food. Ultra-processed foods make up the greater part of the average diet in Britain (57 percent of the UK diet is processed food compared with just 14 percent for France and 13 percent for Italy) and, owing to the nature of these foods, calorie dense yet nutritionally barren, we are now facing the apparent contradiction of the twin spectres of obesity and malnutrition walking hand in hand.

These killers of men and women were not formerly so in lock-step as they are now. In the past, obesity was generally a disease of the rich; a disease of overindulgence, while malnutrition generally affected the poor; a disease of lack.

All that changed with the advent of the processed food industry. Today more than 80 percent of the processed foods

sold in Britain are so unhealthy that, under World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines, they are considered unsafe for marketing to children.

Adults don’t do so well on such a diet either. Today’s prevalent diet of cheap, high calorie, low-nutrient food has led to a situation where 60 percent of adults in the country are overweight or obese. On the current trajectory, that figure is expected to reach 80 percent by 2060.

Obesity’s symptoms include depression, anxiety, infertility, high blood pressure, painful joints, breathlessness, broken sleep, cancer, dementia, heart failure and type 2 diabetes (with its own attendant risks of blindness, peripheral neuropathy and limb amputation). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) estimates that the UK economy loses £74bn a year in reduced workforce productivity, shortened lives and NHS costs as a result of conditions linked to obesity.

Henry Dimbleby, author of *Ravenous: How to Get Ourselves and Our Planet into Shape*, wrote in the *Times* recently: “It is extraordinary that there is not a public uproar about this. Imagine if a novel virus started killing and disabling people on such a scale, and with no end in sight. You don’t have to imagine it: we know how far politicians and the public will go to combat such a threat.

“Unlike Covid, however, the plague of diet-related disease has crept up on us stealthily, under the seductive guise of ‘choice’. Our food system has slid into dysfunction, taking our bodies with it.

“This change has been sufficiently gradual to lull us into a kind of helpless submission. No matter how bad the headlines, the British public (and political class) can’t seem to muster an appropriate level of

fear. Instead, we recoil instinctively into what we believe to be ‘common-sense’ solutions. Too often, those solutions are not just wrong but counterproductive.

“Between 1996 and 2020 successive governments introduced 689 different policies intended to halt our national weight gain. Yet we keep getting fatter and sicker. This is because such policies nearly always come at the problem from the wrong angle.

“They start from the assumption – shared by most in this country – that dietary ill health is chiefly an issue of personal responsibility; that the answer must be to educate the masses in healthy eating, encourage us to exercise and leave the rest to individual willpower.

“This feels like common sense. We know our bodies grow or shrink depending on what we put into them and feel a rush of impatience at the idea of blaming ‘the system’ for our expanding waistlines. Surely it is up to each of us to take responsibility for what we eat?

“This line of thought fails to address the sheer scale of the problem. In 1950 under 1 percent of the UK population was clinically obese. Today, the figure is 28 percent. Are we to believe that, in the intervening years, the population has suffered a massive collapse of willpower? Of course not. Humans have not changed. The food system has.” (Reference)

Obesity isn’t a moral failing; it is a disease. We don’t have ‘obese people’, we have a growing epidemic of people sick with obesity. An individual only has so much power to affect their environment, and when that environment creates all the conditions for obesity to grow, grow it does.

Blaming the individual is merely so much propaganda to

hide the systemic failures that have led to this crisis. Particularly when one considers that no amount of education can change the fact that nutritious fresh foods are now far more expensive than sugary processed (and highly addictive) food-like substances.

The laws of the market combined with the collapse in trade union militancy mean that minimum wages are simply not set at a level that will allow many workers to ‘make the right choice’, even if they had access to the information (and time, and cooking equipment) that would facilitate such ‘choices’.

In hiding these failures and blaming our fellow workers for their system-caused diseases, we only serve the interests of capital.

Humans haven’t changed, the ‘food system’ has

The problem has now become evident to enough people that there is a growing body of work decrying the descent of the British diet. Some investigators provide useful figures to give us an idea of the trend towards the rise of ill-health and early death. A few have even pointed out the seeming indifference to this pandemic by the bourgeois class and its representatives in the political and media establishments.

Fewer still have hinted at a systemic cause. But even those who do speak of food production and its distribution via the market (showing how affordability determines people’s access to food, not need) they examine this phenomenon in isolation: the ‘food system’.

But we don’t live in a ‘food system’. We live in an economic, political and social system, whose operation underpins all production and distribution in Britain: we live in a capitalist

Social

system. The capitalist system is, in part, generalised commodity production, where nigh-on everything is produced for its saleability, not for its use.

Every industry (food or otherwise) under conditions of capitalism creates commodities for sale. But these commodities can only be sold when there is a demand – when there are customers able to pay for them. Under such a system, there is an ever-present risk that customers will not be found when the commodities come to market. This state of affairs may extend for a more or less prolonged period of time, during which the profit that motivated their production can't be realised.

A capitalist could go bust in such a situation, having invested in the production of a commodity that can't be sold, or having produced so many commodities (as economies of scale and the laws of competition continually demand that he must) that the masses of workers can't absorb them (afford to pay for them). Still, if conditions allow, their owner can store these surplus goods until such a time as a market can be found.

The food industry has an in-built disadvantage in this respect: its products, if they have any nutritional value, will rapidly perish. This obviously undermines the potential for storage. If capital is held immobile in a vast quantity of (hopefully temporarily) unsaleable foodstuffs that have mere weeks or even days of shelf-life, this is a profit-destroying disaster in the making. While 5,000 tons of bauxite will keep for as long as their producers have the resources to store them; a strawberry won't.

So how does the food industry deal with this drawback? The holy grail of all industrial commodity food producers is not

nutrition (the human standard for judging food), but portability and shelf life. The first requires packaging, so that food items can be transported over long distances and easily stacked.

The second can be extended in many ways. By freezing (which slows or stops the chemical reactions and biological process that cause foods to decay – preserving nutrition but adding considerably to transport and storage costs). By the addition of preservatives (biocides, antioxidants, salts, large quantities of sugar). By changing the environment in which they are stored (pickling, packing in inert atmospheres). Or by mechanical processing (drying and breaking down ingredients, removing bioavailable constituents so as to inhibit bacterial growth).

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it serves to illustrate the incentives that drive the development of various methods of preservation.

In nature, spoilage of foodstuffs results from the action of bacteria – an entirely unavoidable process. If a food has nutritional value, something will start eating it! Bear in mind that our own digestion consists of trillions of micro-organisms, including a multitude of bacteria, collectively known as the gut microbiome, which live in our stomachs and break down the food we eat to produce energy and various substances our bodies need to stay fit and healthy.

Food processors use machines or automated chemical processes to render food products into a hostile environment for bacteria – either by making them (or their packaging) deadly to bacteria or by removing certain nutrients (macro or micro) that bacteria need to grow and reproduce.

The trouble here is that the things the bacteria need to

grow and thrive are pretty much the same as what humans need to grow and thrive. Meaning that many foodstuffs, after processing, and particularly after 'ultra-processing', which breaks down constituent parts into substances that are very hard for the body to deal with properly, are lacking in the nutrients our bodies are looking for.

Not only are ultra-processed foods lacking nutrition, they are many of them positively toxic – creating for our bodies the double burden of having to process substances that they cannot make use of with systems that are weakened from chronic nutritional deficiencies.

This creates a situation where many of us find ourselves hungry no matter how much we have eaten, pushed by desperate bodies into consuming large numbers of what have been dubbed 'empty calories' in an endless quest to satisfy our bodies' desperate signals for nutrients. Meanwhile, those of us who have been 'educated' into trying to 'take personal responsibility' to avoid this cycle are finding we are simply unable to fund a decent diet; unable to secure adequate nutrition from the products available on a minimum-wage family budget.

Where once we had to eat a certain amount of food to gain a certain amount of vitamins and minerals, things vital to our and our bacteria's health, the advent of ultra-processing and the attendant reduction of those vital compounds now means that we are eating far more in an effort to maintain ourselves from day to day – and storing up long-term consequences for our biological systems as we do so.

This explains the seeming contradiction of a working-class population that is increasingly

suffering from obesity even as it is simultaneously falling ill from undernourishment. We are routinely ingesting 'food-like substances' from which our bodies are unable to extract much in the way of nutrition while simultaneously loading our systems with waste products they simply cannot process.

This in turn is leading to deposits of fat throughout our systems, the furring up of our arteries, the overburdening of our pancreatic, blood sugar and adrenal systems, and all the health problems that follow these dangerous and cumulative problems.

Malnutrition is a social disease

Last year, Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data revealed that around one in six people in the UK were living in relative poverty, measured as "relative low income" before housing costs. This rose to just over one in five people once housing costs were accounted for (as, indeed, they need to be!)

These Britons, many of them pensioners who have worked all their lives, and far too many of them children whose development has barely begun, are routinely suffering from the poverty-induced diseases described above, blighting their lives in manifold and entirely avoidable ways.

The old adage that 'the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members', comes to mind. Certainly, it is our view that the true measure of an economic system is how it provides for the people who produce its wealth.

Measuring the capitalist system through this lens, we find it wholly inadequate and long past its sell-by date.

Proletarian



Capitalist contradictions abound: Victorian illnesses on the rise

How can we explain the seemingly absurd combination of British workers' failing health from malnutrition alongside rising obesity?

Around 11,000 people in England were hospitalised with malnutrition last year. Read that again.

“Provisional data recently obtained by the Times Health Commission under freedom of information laws reveal that cases of malnutrition have more than doubled in a decade and have quadrupled since the banking collapse of 2007/8 and the harsh regime of cuts and austerity that followed in its wake.

“From 2022 to April 2023, 10,896 NHS patients, 312 of them children, were hospitalised with the condition in England ...

“If this is indicative of the health of our most vulnerable, then it is shocking,” commented Dr Clare Gerada, president of the Royal College of GPs. “The poorest people in this country are poorer than any

other counterparts in Europe ... and it's poor diet.

“The most common reason a child under five has a general anaesthetic now is for dental care, so that's a sign of malnutrition. This isn't about the health system, it's about the social determinants of ill health, indicative of the last 15 years of austerity.” (Thousands of people admitted to hospital with malnutrition by Georgia Lambert, The Times, 10 July 2023)

'Victorian' illnesses rear their ugly heads

Doctors are sounding the alarm that the cost-of-living crisis, coming on top of a decade and a half of cuts to social provision and has falling pay, is also leading to a rise in various 'Victorian' illnesses, which British workers had long considered to be things of the past, such as scurvy and rickets.

These diseases, owing to the ease with which they could be cured once their causes were discovered, have barely been seen in any country that has been able to provide the basic necessities to its people.

Scurvy, for instance, develops when a person isn't getting enough vitamin C from their diet. Symptoms include fatigue, swollen or bleeding gums, and susceptibility to bruising. It takes months of persistently low levels of vitamin C to reach the point of disease. Once the scourge of sailors, who endured long journeys on poor-quality rations, the 18th-century surgeon James Lind found that the simple addition of limes to the sailors' diet was enough to eradicate it aboard ship.

Dr Gerada has said that the number of scurvy admissions could be indicative of the inadequate “tea and toast” diet of many elderly Britons, who are unable to afford the high cost of fresh fruit and vegetables. Subsistence on tea and toast is the reward that awaits a

worker after a lifetime of work in this late stage of capitalism's decline.

Rickets, as suffered by Tiny Tim in Charles Dickens's A Christmas Carol, is a disease caused by a lack of vitamin D or calcium. It affects bone development, causing pain, poor growth and weakened bones, which in turn can lead to deformities. It mostly disappeared in the west in the early 1900s after many foods began to be fortified with vitamin D.

“People are doing without. Parents are struggling to do the basics for their children. We're going back to a situation where unless we look after our poor, we're going to end up with more of these diseases of the Victorian era,” says Dr Gerada. “We won't end up like the Victorians because it'll all be sorted by a tablet, but it's a sad environment that we have to sort out poverty by giving out vitamin supplements.”

A looming health crisis

Anna Taylor, director of the Food Foundation, described Britain's current food environment as a “ticking time bomb for health”.

Taylor, who is a nutritionist with a long career supporting projects in Africa and South Asia, said: “We have a diet crisis which is in parallel to some of the poorest countries in the world that have got very high levels of undernutrition in children and very high levels of childhood stunting, and we've got a similarly proportionate problem which we see manifest in our children. ▶ page 26