

WORKERS' fight



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"The emancipation of the working class will only be achieved by the working class itself" (Karl Marx)

LET US UNITE AND FIGHT FOR THE PAY RISE WE ALL NEED!

In the week before the official start to the summer holidays, the press announced that wages had risen to "record" levels.

But for workers on strike for a pay rise - and with no results to show for it after 13 months of action - this news of a record "pay rise" (where?) was astonishing!

The Office for National Statistics reported that between March and May, wages had risen by 7.3%! But with inflation 8.7% CPI (RPI=11.3%!) these "record high" wages are still lagging. So it had to admit that "the average worker" (whoever that is!) "saw real regular pay (...) once inflation is taken into account - fall by 0.8% for the three months to May"... and was "theoretically poorer than a year earlier". Whatever being "theoretically" poor means, as opposed to "really" poor...

So whose pay has been going "up"?

If one takes all these pundits at their word, though, and given the ongoing strikes and pay settlements averaging 4-5% or less up to now, how does one account for this 7.3% "increase"?

None among the large battalions of public or private sector workers saw their pay rise in this period - and many are still in dispute with the bosses or the government. Postal workers, who finally accepted Royal Mail's pay deal, got 6% pay rise for 2023 (a real pay cut of at least 2.7%). Besides, most workers have been in pay deficit for many years. Railway workers' pay has been frozen for 4 years. So, exactly whose pay went up? The answer to this question speaks volumes for this system, with its institutionalised poverty and exploitation!

Yes, the "average rise" in pay can be mainly accounted for by the increase in the minimum wage, since so many



millions of workers - many in the huge subcontracted sector - are paid no more than this pittance!

This April it went up by 9.7% for those over 23, from £9.50 to £10.42/hour. Which still doesn't turn it into a "living" wage, despite the Tories "rebranding" of it as such. And 18-20 year-olds now get just £7.49/hour!

Ten percent of very little is very little: nobody can survive on this wage, even by working 24/7, given today's (still) soaring cost of living, and above all, rising rents and mortgages. Of course the fact that this phoney wage rise was reported as if workers were somehow succeeding in their pay claims and strikes is no coincidence. Only one or two papers explained that it was the out-of-proportion minimum wage rise that was responsible.

To fight inflation we need a wage rise

So now Hunt and his capitalist masters

insist once more, that wage rises could be inflationary and must be kept in check. And aren't we all in favour of "beating" inflation? Yes, as if it was working class spending which "pushed" up inflation rather than price hikes which "pulled" it up!

Except that they had to admit that the price cap on energy in April, which cut average bills from £356/month to £273/month caused inflation to fall by 2%... So how about more price controls?

In fact it's only a decent wage rise which will help the working class get back on its feet. Sunak's "take-it-or-leave it" 6-7% for the whole public sector, is still a cut in real pay. So there can be no backing down from this fight. The battle must continue - in the workplaces and the streets. And one year later, it's high time that the ranks of all sections of workers were united - and all out! Because that's the only way to win. ☐

FRANCE: THE RACIST KILLING OF NAHEL

On 27 June, the French police shot 17 year-old Nahel Merzouk dead at a police car checkpoint in the suburbs of Paris. This is the 3rd murder by armed police officers this year, after 13 people were killed last year - and of course, the majority of those killed are of migrant origin, like Nahel, who was from a Moroccan and Algerian background. But this time, the video showing the murder went viral and triggered riots that quickly spread across French cities - even reaching Belgium and Switzerland.

Unlike in England and Wales, where only 6,200 so-called Authorised Firearm Officers carry guns, in France, most cops carry them. The 150,000 National police officers (under the control of the equivalent of the Home office) - including the CRS (Republican Security Association) which specialises in putting down riots - carry guns. In addition, the 100,000 "Gendarmes" of the Gendarmerie Nationale (under the control of the Ministry of Defence) also carry firearms. Even the 25,000 local council policemen can carry guns if the local mayor demands it! These police bodies are notorious for their racism, as has been shown countless times, when videos of beatings or killings are exposed on social media. It's not a coincidence that at least 1 out of 2 officers vote for the anti-migrant far-right!



But the number of motorists shot dead by the police has increased, especially since a law allowing officers to fire their arms freely was passed in 2017. After a group of youth expressed their anger against the police, by setting a police car on fire and injuring officers, the Socialist Party government of François Hollande at the time passed a law supposed to tackle "terrorist threats", giving officers the freedom to shoot to kill in specific

scenarios, including "when they are unable to immobilise ... the drivers who do not comply with the order to stop ... and which are likely, in their flight, to cause injury to themselves or to others". In fact, now French officers are able to fire their guns without even having to claim that it was a case of self-defence! Unsurprisingly, the number of motorists shot dead by the police has increased sixfold since the law was passed! □

Jailed for the "crime" of abortion

This June, Carla Foster, a mother of three, was sentenced to 28 months in prison for using abortion pills to end a 30-32-week pregnancy. For this, she was found guilty of a criminal offence - under a very old and outdated law which still provides the framework for the 1967 Act, which conditionally legalised abortion. The law in question is the "1861 Offences against the Person Act". Carla was charged with "administering poison with intent to procure a miscarriage".

She had made two mistakes. She took the pills very late in her pregnancy: they are meant to be taken before 10-12 weeks. But she'd also passed the 24-week limit for legal abortion. However, as anyone would expect, there were good reasons for this. She'd fallen

pregnant just before the Covid pandemic struck, and with a partner with whom she was no longer having a relationship. Disorganised, harassed and unwell, she only contacted the British Pregnancy Advisory Service in May 2020, explaining she was just over 7 weeks pregnant. Because of the pandemic the pills were dispatched in the post. She duly took them without any real understanding of the consequences. When she began to have labour pains, she immediately took herself to hospital where she was delivered of a stillborn baby.

Despite a letter sent to the court from a number of health organisations, arguing against her imprisonment and citing extenuating circumstances (one of her 3 kids is disabled), the judge decided she must go to jail, to deter

others from exceeding the 24-week legal limit on abortions. He accepted Foster was in a state of "emotional turmoil", but he added that she should be punished for lying about the timing of her pregnancy to BPAS in order to "illegally" obtain abortion pills.

The first question to be asked is why the 1861 Act is still in use? Abortion should have been decriminalised in 1967! The second is the question of a woman's autonomy as regards her own life. It is clear that this case was a medical emergency precipitated by the belated (due to the Covid pandemic) - but perfectly legitimate - attempt by a woman to control her fertility - an attempt which went badly wrong, but for which she "paid" (as women always do!) through physical and mental trauma.

There is a 3rd question: why in the 2020s do there not exist appropriate, well-funded and professionally staffed centres for women's health? BPAS which provides some services is a voluntary charity. The NHS, even when in better shape had next to nothing to offer. Yet contraception, abortion, pregnancy... are all fundamental parts of every woman's life and impinge on everyone. It is this - still patriarchal - society under capitalism, guilty of a criminal lack of such facilities, which should be put on trial. In the meantime, hands off women's right to abortion!



Our society

• ASLEF train drivers: overtime should be permanently banned

At the time of writing, the ASLEF drivers' pay dispute continues - sort of. Railway bosses have failed to increase the offer of 4% for 2022 plus 4% for 2023 - which the union leadership turned down. In the meantime the union has held a ballot in 16 companies over the renewal of the strike mandate and just over 90% of drivers have voted to continue the fight. The only problem is that there isn't one.

New "action" announced by the leadership consists solely of an overtime ban. Of course, given the shortage of drivers generally and across all companies, this ban can severely disrupt services. On 3-8 July, drivers refused rest-day working and refused to work non-contractual overtime. This will again happen from 17-22 July. As a result, most Train Operating Companies (TOCs) have had to put in place amended timetables, to avoid on-the-day cancellations. GTR for instance is running a "special" timetable with less than 50% of trains running. Chiltern told passengers to avoid travel completely and Gatwick



Express trains did not run.

In fact the train drivers' overtime ban appears to be organised according to that old adage - "cause the maximum disruption at the minimum cost" to the strikers. But it's been blatantly obvious

to all those involved on the ground, that on the contrary, hitting hard, using maximum force in minimum time, gives the best chance of winning! And that's even more relevant given the long haul that it's been for so many workers.

• Are the teachers strikes over? Should they be?

Teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) in England have taken 8 days of strike since February. They rejected the government's offer of a 4.3% pay offer back in April. Awkwardly for the government, the School Teachers' Review Body, has recommended a pay rise of 6.5% for 2023/24, in its report. The most recent strikes, on 5 and 7 July, were called by the NEU leadership to "put pressure" on Gillian Keegan to accept this recommendation. And now she has.

Implicit in the union leaders' choice to call a strike this summer was the

idea that teachers should "prove" to the government that they were prepared to take action, even if it meant disrupting the all-important exams. But ironically, this choice actually reduced "disruption" - as many secondary school classes were already finished and most teachers were not doing much teaching.

The NEU has now called-off its strikes, and has recommended that its members accept the still below-inflation 6.5% offer.

There was certainly less enthusiasm for this round of strikes. This July, no

national demonstration was organised unlike during the last strikes, back in May.

Ironically, all four main education unions (NEU, NASUWT, ASCL, and NAHT) are currently balloting their members to get a mandate to continue strike action in September. Whether all these education workers will be able to carry out joint action in the new academic year, if the 6.5% is turned down, remains to be seen. But there are plenty of other issues in schools which could do with striking over... ☐

The NHS at 75 - alive, but not so well

On 5 July it was exactly 75 years since the NHS was founded. Coinciding with this "historic" moment, is another one, however: the longest strike in the history of the NHS. Junior doctors walked off their jobs and stood on picket lines outside their hospitals from the 13 to the 18 July. Members of Unite union from London's Guys and St Thomas' and the Yorkshire Ambulance service joined them, demanding better pay and safer staffing levels.

For sure, the main issue for strikers is pay, but linked to that, is the retention of staff. The worker-shortage at every level of the NHS cripples the service. Today there are still 112,000 vacancies, despite ongoing - worldwide - recruitment campaigns.

But this brain drain of other countries' medical staff is parasitic. The NHS never bothered to train enough doctors or nurses - always relying on the differential

in wages between poor and rich countries. And indeed, this has meant a steady supply of health workers seeking better prospects in Britain. According to Voice columnist Dotun Adebayo, last year 1,200 nurses from Ghana joined the British nursing register. He asks, "is this not a prima facie example of Britain under-developing Africa, or at least the African NHS?"

Which brings us to the government's NHS Workforce Plan, finally published on 30 June. It promises 900,000 more NHS staff coming on line (hopefully not literally!) by 2028. But it provides very few details and there is no credible funding plan. And 15 years is a very long time to wait when the situation today is already "code red". Good intentions pave the road to hell, as the saying goes. The NHS isn't quite on that road yet. If the fight by its workforce for better conditions and decent wages wins today, it might just avoid it.



Housing

A "helping hand" for mortgage owners? Hardly!

Thanks to the Bank of England's 10 separate interest rate increases in the last 12 months, some home-owners with mortgages saw their repayments double or even triple. The last rise took the BoE rate to 5%, but the mortgage lenders are demanding over 6%: an average 2-year fixed rate mortgage is now lent at 6.47% interest, compared to 2.44% in 2020!

It's people with tracker mortgages (they track the BoE base rate and add a set percentage above it) or variable-rate mortgages, who feel the immediate impact of these increases. The average monthly tracker mortgage repayment has already increased by £464.79. Many people have fallen behind with their

repayments. Mortgage arrears have increased by 12.5% since 2022, to £14.9 billion - the highest since 2021.

To "help" the mortgage owners, Chancellor Jeremy Hunt has come up with 3 "voluntary" measures which lenders can offer mortgagees. One: allow them to switch to interest-only payments and/or extend the life of the loan. Two: let them revert to their original deal within the first six months of the switch, without affecting their credit score - and three, offer a 12-month grace period before any repossession proceedings begin!

This may be better than losing one's home, but interest-only payments or extending the life of the loan just postpones

crunch time! In fact, it may even make matters worse, by increasing the final sums owed. As for the repossession grace period, it's just another postponement!

Of course, there are ways of challenging lenders. Repossessions can be opposed collectively. Borrowers can demand cancellation of debts. But that means organising and fighting! Ultimately, the real problem is the existence of a whole layer of parasites - the banks, mortgage companies and big and small loan sharks - who make a living out of stealing part of the working class's income just because we have no choice but to pay for a roof over our heads. ☐

• Can the housing crisis get any worse?

The housing crisis is one of the most urgent issues facing the working class. The increase in mortgage interest rates means higher mortgage costs for buy-to-let landlords, who are passing on this increase to renters. And given that the availability of social housing at controlled rents is at an all-time low, this is a big factor in working class poverty, the choice between eating and heating... and paying rent! It means many more renters will face evictions.

In fact rent increases for 12 consecutive months up to April 2023 hit a record high, reaching an average of £1,126 per month, £110 higher than a year ago. Overall, properties are 25% more expensive than before the Covid-19 pandemic hit in 2020, according to estate agents Hamptons, and rents still rose by another 9% in May compared with the year before.

On top of this, it's becoming more and more difficult to find a rental property as

landlords resort to selling up. In April, a big rental agency in London reported that 97,000 tenants were chasing after just 2,000 properties!

For sure, there have never been enough good quality homes for all who need them. So rents will keep going up. And by the way, buy-to-let mortgages, were not included in Jeremy Hunt's "help" plan for mortgage owners. So the question is, where will all these old and new renters go?

• Evictions have to stop!

Landlords have been evicting tenants as if it going out of fashion. In 2022, over 24,000 households were thrown out of their homes after being served a "no fault" eviction, compared to 16,030 in 2021. So now the government is boasting about its "Renters Reform Bill", introduced on 17 May (but it has not even had its second reading yet!), which is supposed to ban "no fault" evictions.

Of course, there are still enough loopholes built into the bill for landlords to find "legitimate" ways to get rid of their tenants. So for instance, it bans the re-letting of a property for three months after landlords have evicted tenants, if they claim they are selling, or moving into the property themselves. But after these three months, they can re-let! This is just a "no fault" eviction by another name!

In fact, there are landlords who



don't even bother with the law. In 2022, 8,000 tenants were thrown out "illegally", compared to 7,600 in 2021. What is "new", is the extent to which some landlords will go, in order to get tenants to leave. For instance by using fake bailiffs, hired from private security firms, kitted out with stab vests, radios

and handcuffs. But why do they resort to such measures, when "no fault" evictions are still legal? Quite simply because they don't want to wait for the 2-months "no fault" eviction notice. And because only a tiny minority of landlords (less than 0.2%!) face penalties for "illegal" evictions anyway!

William's homeless charity... really?

Prince William has declared that he will "finally end homelessness" with his royal charity "Homeward" launched in June. It starts with a budget of £3m to be spent in six towns... that is £500,000 per town! This budget is laughable, given that there are 1.2m people on council waiting lists in England. William's £3m budget can't even be called a drop in the ocean!

But the fact that William, now Prince of Wales and Duke of Cornwall and Cambridge, pledges to end homelessness when he presides over a property empire worth £1bn - and when he could probably personally afford to house every homeless person in England and Wales - this is obscenely distasteful. His own official residence, Kensington Palace, has 20 rooms. Adelaide Cottage, where he lives has only 4 bedrooms, but sits on a 655-acre "garden". As for his

country home, Anmer Hall, a nice little wedding gift from the late Queen, it has 10 bedrooms! And then there are Tam-Na-Ghar, Highgrove and Frogmore House...

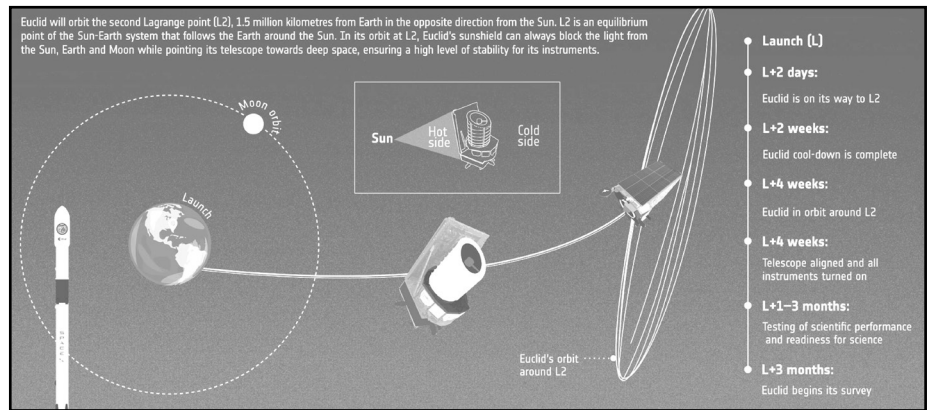
So while William throws what amounts to a few pennies at the homeless, an immediate solution today would be for them to occupy his empty rooms and underused residences - as well as the stately piles belonging to his fellow-aristocrats!

• **Euclid: internationalism shows the way**

The European Space Agency's (ESA) telescope - named Euclid - took off on a Falcon 9 rocket made by Elon Musk's SpaceX on 1 July. It aims to reach an observation point 1.5 million kilometres from Earth. During its 6-year mission, it will be sending information back to astro-scientists which, we are told, will for the first time allow the accurate mapping of 36% of the "sky" above us - 2 billion galaxies located up to 10 billion light-years from Earth!

Euclid is the largest and most sophisticated telescope ever sent into space. It is able to observe more of the universe in one day than the Hubble telescope has managed in its 25 years of star-gazing. By knowing the shape, position and movement of galaxies, scientists aim to better understand the universe's distribution of energy and matter. They will look at what holds it together - so-called "dark matter", and what drives it apart, so-called "dark energy".

The construction and launch of this telescope, costing £1.2 billion, was the result of over 15 years of work by more



than 3,000 scientists and engineers. And, necessarily, this involved close international collaboration, with the participation of laboratories in Britain, Japan, the US and the 14 EU countries.

The successful launch of Euclid gives us some idea of the great potential for far-reaching space exploration if only all the skills and knowledge which already exist internationally could come together and act collectively in everyone's interests.

Instead, for the time being most resources - whether human or technical, are kept confined within national borders, usually at the disposal of one rival state against another and subject to the "profit test": if you can't make money out of it, you can't do it... This is precisely why society the world over, has to be freed of capitalism and its profit motive. It's the main cause of destruction and the main obstacle to progress.

• **Covid Inquiry: whitewashing a murderous State**

This June, the Covid Inquiry into the government's handling of the pandemic started its public hearings, more than one year late. It is likely to last for years and to be one of the most expensive inquiries ever carried out in Britain (£114m for now), comparable to the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower fire and the Hillsborough football stadium disaster.

Yet the answers to the three questions which its chair, Court of Appeal judge, "Baroness" Hallett is asking, are already known. "Yes, the preparation was inadequate", "yes, the response was too little too late" - and "no, the lessons will not be learnt". Perhaps this explains why, according to the polls, around 53% of people are not bothering to follow its

proceedings. Or maybe they just expect a whitewash.

But nevertheless it serves a purpose: it allows politicians and government scientists like the Whitty-Valance double-act to "wash their hands" of the 225,000 Covid deaths for which they were certainly partly, if not wholly responsible.

"Module 1" saw witnesses like former PM Cameron and former Chancellor Osborne - questioned about the effect of their austerity policies on the NHS - which was left wholly unprepared for a pandemic. Of course, they denied this. Osborne even added that: "austerity left Britain better prepared, making money available for furlough"! Cameron "excused" himself by saying that: "they

had focused too much on preparations for an Influenza pandemic (and not a Covid one!)" - as is if the measures required were not very much the same...

Hunt (Health secretary 2012-18) admitted that the government's priority at the time was to "plan for the event of a no-deal Brexit". Hancock dared to repeat that early measures weren't put in place when the pandemic struck, because: "herd immunity was inevitably going to be the only way you could contain a virus"... So yes, they left the gate open so that the virus could escape and for starters, kill 30,000 elderly people in care homes - thanks entirely to their conscious choices. Is that involuntary, or voluntary, manslaughter?

Money tap runs dry for Thames Water

Thames Water, which provides water for London and the Thames basin, is £14.3bn in debt. It's been struggling to raise further capital from its shareholders - needed urgently, to invest in upgrades for its crumbling infrastructure. £500m, agreed last year, was only paid in March - and a further £1bn, "subject to conditions", is outstanding. The CEO resigned last month. Now politicians on both right and left are calling for its renationalisation.

Thames Water's debt equals 80% of its capital value, far exceeding the regulator Ofwat's recommendation of 60%. In fact, 7 of the 9 water and sewerage companies in England exceed this debt ratio. Thames already had £3.2bn worth of debt before private

equity infrastructure group, Macquarie, bought it in 2006. But when it was sold again in 2017 this had increased to £10.5bn!

Where did this all this borrowed money go? Certainly not on renewing their pipes! In fact company bosses handed it out to shareholders: £7.2bn has been paid in dividends since privatisation in 1989. Now the company finds itself overwhelmed by its maintenance responsibilities, rising energy and debt service costs, And what is the new CEO's answer? To pass the bill to its "customers"! By the way, it's worth mentioning that all that debt was built up under the indulgent eye of "regulator", Ofwat!



WINDRUSH: 75 YEARS LATER, CARIBBEAN WORKERS STILL FIGHTING THE SYSTEM

The government declared 22 June National Windrush Day to commemorate 75 years since the Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury Docks in Essex, from Kingston, Jamaica in 1948. On this particular journey, it brought 500 workers, specially invited to come to Britain because of the post-WW2 shortage of hands in the public sector.

Many of them had served in the British army during the war - and one of them, Sam King (who much later became Mayor of Southwark) recounts in his memoir how his family had to sell three cows to buy his ticket which would cost around £600 in today's money. He also recalls how this first Windrush "generation" wasn't exactly welcome; quite the opposite, as rumours spread on board that the ship wouldn't be allowed to dock. Two men decided to eavesdrop the ship's radio and heard the then Labour Colonial Secretary saying: "These people have British passports and they must be allowed to land"... but then he added that "they would not last one winter in England anyway, so there was nothing to worry about!" In fact no preparations had been made to receive the workers. Eventually the Colonial Office (reluctantly) opened a deep air-raid shelter under Clapham Common for 230 of the new arrivals - a cold, dark and damp welcome...

Deporting "saviours of the NHS"

Not much has changed since then, except these rather hypocritical celebrations of Caribbean immigration take place from time to time - like "Windrush 75". And never mind that these workers formed the backbone of the British working class and still do. In fact today, the name "Windrush" is far more likely to be associated with the scandal caused by the Home Office's detention and deportation of mainly Jamaican - but also other immigrant workers. This began after then Home Secretary,



Theresa May's racist playing to the anti-immigrant gallery. She instituted a so-called "hostile environment" crack-down in 2012 which meant that the NHS, all employers, landlords, banks, etc., were obliged to check employees' papers, with the aim of weeding out "undocumented migrants", and forcing them to leave.

Many of the Windrush generation arrived as children on their parents' passports. The Home Office destroyed thousands of landing cards and other records, so they couldn't prove their right to remain - not unless they could produce an official document proving their residence for every year they had lived here. Most couldn't. After losing access to housing, healthcare, bank accounts, etc., many were placed in immigration detention, prevented from travelling abroad and threatened with forcible removal; some were deported to countries they hadn't seen since they were kids. This eventually caused a huge outcry. Belatedly, in 2018, the government promised to put right these profound wrongs.

The Windrush scandal isn't over

However, there is still a backlog of cases still to be resolved. The so-called Windrush compensation scheme was never fit for purpose. Out of 15,000 "eligible" claimants, by the beginning of last year, only 1,600 had received any payments. Today we are told that 5.8% of claimants have received something. In the meantime 23 of those affected by this scandal have died. The "action plan" eventually undertaken in 2020, to "right the wrongs" for the Windrush generation, was dumped by Suella Braverman in 2023.

But Theresa May's policies which led to this scandal are still in place. The 'Hostile Environment' - which bars those without the right papers from welfare, the NHS and any other kind of official social support and can put them in prison, still remains. This is the shadow hanging over everyone on this small island, where we are all immigrants. The fight for justice for the Windrush Generation continues... ☐

"Poems on the Underground" has featured Jamaican poets this month thanks to Windrush 75. Here is part of Louise Bennet's anti-colonial poem written in Jamaican "patois" but well-easy to understand! And it speaks for itself!

Colonization In Reverse by Louise Bennett, 1966

"Wat a joyful news, miss Mattie,
I feel like me heart gwine burs
Jamaica people colonizin
Englan in reverse.

By de hundred, by de tousan
From country and from town,

By de ship-load, by de plane-load
Jamaica is Englan boun.

Dem a pour out a Jamaica
Everybody future plan
Is fe get a big-time job
An settle in de mother lan.

What a islan! What a people!
Man an woman, old an young
Jus a pack dem bag an baggage
An tun history upside dung!
(...)

Wat a devilment a Englan!
Dem face war an brave de worse,
But me wonderin how dem gwine stan
Colonizin in reverse."

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Spring 2022

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Refugee crisis**Refugees drowned off the Greek coast: anti-migrant authorities responsible!**

On Wednesday June 14, a rusty, battered fishing boat, hardly 30 meters long, capsized and sank in open seas 50 miles off the coast of Greece. It was carrying over 700 hundred refugees crammed on the decks, the bridge and in the cargo hold, with limited supplies of food and water. According to a survivor, two men had already died of thirst on board during the crossing.

There were just 104 survivors (who are now held in camps around Greece under constant surveillance and with limited freedom to contact the press or their relatives), while 82 people were recovered dead. The rest - probably over 600 hundred people - are lost forever, at the bottom of the sea and we will likely never know their names.

Attempted push-back

Meanwhile the Greek coast guard has used every trick in its dirty book to shift the blame away from itself and even pointed a finger at the victims of the shipwreck! Indeed, from the first day, we heard stories that the victims "refused help". Soon these claims were refuted both by survivors and refugee organisations, who received distress calls from refugees on the boat. The narrative then changed, and all sorts



of "experts" claimed that the boat was so overcrowded that the coastguard could not approach without putting it in further danger.

This lie was soon exposed when it was revealed that the coast guard not only approach the boat, but actually attempted to tow it - most likely an attempt at "pushback" - trying to shift it into the jurisdiction of Malta or Italy which, according to many survivors' accounts, caused it to capsize and sink. The police immediately took the 40 mobile phones of survivors, who were in Kalamata hospital, so that the evidence of the Greek coast guard's responsibility would "disappear".

Anti-migrant measures to blame

The Greek government and the EU are now blaming "human trafficking networks" and 9 refugees are being held in prison as scapegoats, accused of being people-smugglers. All that to hide the fact that it is the the EU-Turkey deal of 2016 and the tough immigration measures implemented by the Greek government, which are responsible for pushing desperate refugees into the hands of human traffickers.

It is these official measures which are entirely responsible for the loss of the more than 21,000 lives at sea, on this dangerous crossing from North Africa. □

Britain's "Illegal Migration Bill": from planes to barges

The plan to deport asylum seekers and migrants who have arrived here "irregularly", to Rwanda, was rejected by the the Court of Appeal. It overturned a decision made by the High Court last December, which had deemed the plan "lawful." The Appeal Court has ruled that contrary to the government's assertion, removal to Rwanda is not "safe". But however, not because of President Kagame's murderous regime, but because refugees could face deportation on arrival, to the very countries they had fled.

Question Time surprises

On hearing this ruling, Home Secretary Suella Braverman's immediate response was to claim that this was proof that the system was "rigged against the British people"! An extraordinary reaction, even coming from her! So what did the "British people" for whom she presumed to speak, actually think? The BBC's Fiona Bruce asked her Question Time audience

that evening : did they think that "illegal" migrants should be deported to Rwanda? Did they thus feel cheated by the Court and agree with Braverman? Not one person in this audience - the majority of whom had identified as conservative voters(!) - raised a hand - to the visible surprise of Fiona Bruce!

A system rigged against refugees

In the meantime the "Illegal Migration Bill" is ping-ponging between the House of Commons and the Lords after more than 168 Lords' amendments were considered and at least 20 voted down - as expected given the Conservative majority in the House. The Bill will (possibly!) reach its final stage and become law after a further two days of ping-pong on 17 and 18 July.

Meanwhile, Sunak and Braverman continue their attacks against refugees, including the preparation of floating barges off the coast of Portland in Dorset, to

house those waiting to have their asylum claims processed - here in Britain, for the time being. There is a backlog of over 160,000 people still awaiting a decision as to whether they can stay or must go...

Open the borders, charter the ferries!

Of course, the backlog is a problem of the government's own making after serial cuts to Home Office staff over many years. What's more, despite all efforts to "stop the boats" coming over the Channel, they keep coming. Sure proof, if it was needed, that the only solution to the ever-growing migration of refugees (and, moreover, human-trafficking) is to let refugees move freely across all borders and to give them all the help they need, to do so. As a refugee woman told a reporter who asked "how can you put your child in a dangerous boat?": "I do it because the water in front of us is safer than the land behind us". □

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**Ford workers: fighting for 120 years!**

This June, Ford Motor Company in Dearborn USA celebrated its 120th anniversary. Its publicity department provided a suitable whitewash of Ford's history for the occasion... "the company has traversed the vicissitudes and triumphs of world wars... advanced worker and civil rights, and endeavoured to improve workplace health, product safety and environmental sustainability". It wouldn't do to remind anyone that founder Henry Ford admired Hitler, was a racist and anti-Semite and employed Al Capone's hitman Harry Bennett to keep union organisers out of his plants - not to mention the actual killings perpetrated by Bennett and his thugs along with the police in 1932, when they emptied their guns into the crowd of hunger

marchers (it was the height of the Great Depression) who'd gathered outside the Rouge plant, killing 4 workers outright and wounding 60...

The conditions of Ford workers today, however, are not all that different from those described in the novel: "The Flivver King" by American writer, Upton Sinclair, which tells the story of Henry Ford - inventor of the "Flivver", i.e., the Model "T", and alongside him, a worker called Abner Shutt... Yes, whether producing F150 trucks in the Rouge (Dearborn US) today or diesel engines in Dagenham, London, in 2023, the same Ford bosses ensure we're exploited in the same old way.

But in our 120 years of fighting back, there've been some key moments. Like



the great sit-ins of Motor City Detroit auto workers in 1936-37, the 1974 shop floor riots in Motor City Dagenham for lay-off pay, or the 9-week strike in 1978-9 led by the Ford Workers' Committee which broke the Labour government's pay restraint, winning an 18% pay rise... among many others. Today, whether in the USA, Britain, Rumania, Turkey, or any of the countries across the world where Ford plants are located, the next chapter in our militant history is waiting to be written! ☐

• Tortoise vs hare

We're surprised to hear that all of a sudden - despite the mayhem of the production see-saw, we're apparently ahead of targets compared to the other plants! Lucky we have such a bountiful supply of faulty parts then! We all know the one about the tortoise and the hare... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 05/07/23]

• How about snails' pace?

What's this pallet maze all around

us?? We hear it's something to do with a "planned increase in targets" before shutdown.... All that for other plants to get their engines to fit while we're away?! Uh-uh. We say no point in rushing and then shutting - neither here, nor elsewhere. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 05/07/23]

• Walk out to find out...

Lineside Logistics workers are still waiting for our backdated wages to be paid in full - apparently postponed again to the 9

June..! It turned out that the payslip sent to us by a company contracted by LLL, had an excess of £500 in tax deducted compared to the HMRC requirement! The only way for us to solve this "mystery"- i.e., fiddle, is to force LLL and its contractor to be fully transparent; and we need to twist LLL's arm (with our feet!) to cough up £1,550 in backpay!

PS: We'd also like some transparency from the union over the vote count which supposedly caused them to cancel our strike..! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 05/07/23]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**R&H pay offer: "Here we go again"? No, we need something different**

We hear that union officials from Unite and the R&H bosses are intending to start negotiations over our pay and conditions again. Unite has sent us a "survey", which lists three options: "RPI+ pay award", "Pay protection" or "no job cuts" and asks us to choose which of these is "most important" to us. But right now what we need is an end to WTA, proper sick pay, shorter shifts, and a pay rise of at least £500 a month! However they didn't even ask us!

In fact since our 1-day strike in May

2022, when Unite leaders threatened an 8-day stoppage and in the end cancelled 7 of them, declaring a "victory", we're actually worse off! The increase in pay of £1.50/hour has not only been wiped out by inflation, but cuts in shifts have meant straight wage cuts. And then there is the 3-tier system agreed by union officials, which means anyone who's been here less than 2 years (the majority!) gets even lower pay!

This time round, rather than leaving



negotiations to the union full-timers who claim to act on our behalf, it will make far better sense for us to decide what, where, and how, ourselves, and to keep the fight for all of our demands in our own hands! ☐

• Where next?

In the Paint Shop, we missed out on the flooding a couple of weeks ago, but had our own breakdown and three hour stoppage last week on the night shift. The chain carrying the cars through the oven snapped, meaning the whole line had to be stopped, the oven turned off and cooled down before anyone could get in to fix it. Meanwhile, we had an extended break and an easy night! We're looking forward to whatever goes wrong next! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/07/23]

• Screwing with our plans...

At the drop of their hat, BMW is adding 3 to 5 days to the summer shutdown (depending on where we work and which crew). Many of us had already made our plans and booked our flights. Now to find we could have taken longer, perhaps travelling cheaper midweek, etc. We are going to have to figure out how to repay the company for this inconvenience... and certainly not by agreeing to pay back the time, take annual leave or go unpaid!

PS: And then BMW comes asking who could work the first 3 days of shutdown? Unbelievable! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/07/23]

• ... Deserves "repayment"

In Assembly, where some of us are getting shut out all that week, we have been told we're expected to pay back WTA at 100%. The only thing we "owe" bloody-minded BMW is 1,000% of the grief it gives us! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/07/23]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**Letter from the North West**

We wasted no time in voting "no" when the ballot over the "agreement" finally got underway. What choice did we have? No sooner were we opening our delayed ballot papers at home, than we were under attack in the workplace. We know an offer stinks when the gaffers get us into meetings to tell us to vote "yes". They can look forward to a cash payment if we comply. That alone makes us all want to vote "no".

Those of us who can afford to access the social media gazed upon the union's postings over the deal with disbelief.

What a load of nonsense. The BBC shows fewer repeats! It's simply dishonest to tell us this is the way to improve our working lives. The changes outlined in it were already happening before the result (acceptance by 75.8%) was even announced. We're the horses that didn't even get a chance to bolt out of the stable door!

We thought we'd escaped the dark satanic mills of yesteryear. In fact a permanent cloud hangs over the new and large "super hub" where we're now



meant to work. There's nothing super about it. The Victorians operated safer workplaces. It's so dangerous that a health and safety inspector had to come in and see if our complaints were true. If this workhouse is a vision of the future we'd rather go back to the "good" 'ol days! ☐

• Not an endorsement

We thought the vote on this rotten, sell-out deal would be closer - not the 75.8% "for" it which was announced on Tuesday. But how can the union officials say with a straight face that 67% is an "unprecedented turnout" and that the deal was "overwhelmingly endorsed"? As many as a third of us did not vote. So of all eligible voters, only 50.8% voted "yes"! Of course Ward and Furey et al aren't going to admit that. [Workers' fight bulletin, Mount Pleasant 12/07/23]

• Ward for CEO?

The (less rude, quotable) comments accompanying the Twitter-feed during Ward's Youtube piece at least reflected what most of us think. From Deliveries: "we've been thrown under a bus"; "callers thrown to the dogs"; and sarcastically, "Ward for a Knighthood!"...

And then, "everybody out!" And many asked "what has happened to our sacked workmates"? [Workers' fight bulletin, Mount Pleasant 12/07/23]

• Lotta continua!

We noticed that quite a few mates said they'd dump their union membership. Yes, it's a betrayal of our fight. The leadership pushed us to vote "yes", as if there was no alternative. But in or out of the union - the battle is still on, on the shopfloor... against realignments, shift changes, cuts, overworking, overtime, Sundays, etc., etc., all these changes which management still has to implement - and that fight is only just starting! [Workers' fight bulletin, Mount Pleasant 12/07/23]

King's Cross railway station (London)**LNER: 100 years of progress... or regression?**

The East Coast mainline, once more using its original name, the "London & North Eastern Railway" is boasting about its 100-year history, announcing: "LNER, 100 years of progress". And pictures of happy, smiling, LNER railway workers are on display everywhere...

The London to Edinburgh-Inverness service (plus 2 other branch lines), was created in 1923, by an Act of Parliament. In 1938, its streamlined Mallard locomotive set a world speed record for steam power of 126 mph, never broken since and still impressive by today's standards: LNER's fleet of Hitachi Azuma locos don't go any faster, at 125 mph...

But what is there to boast about today? The "dining experience"? Long-distance

rail companies like LNER used to be famous for their silver service dining cars, open to all passengers, with chef-cooked, 3-course lunches and dinners, as well as breakfasts. Reduced somewhat after rail privatisation in 1995, the renamed Great North-Eastern Railway was, however, still offering cooked meals in the dining car, for both 1st and 2nd class (but now called "Standard") passengers (now called "customers"!). But then in 2011, after the government took over from a failing National Express (before Virgin's disastrous franchise began in 2015) the dining car was abolished on grounds of cost - and that was that.

Today's LNER offers extortionate travel in coaches which are cramped



and uncomfortable. There is no "dining experience". First class "customers" get pre-packed ready meals. Standard passengers must content themselves with sandwiches and a visit to a poorly-stocked bar, even though a journey to Inverness lasts a minimum of 8 hours.

As for the "happy" workers in LNER's 100-year celebration pictures, we haven't had a pay rise for 4 years. And we are still taking strike action! ☐

• Ticket office closures? No!

When the closure of ticket offices was announced last week - and still in the middle of our dispute - did the RMT leadership call an immediate walk-out? Or at least one as soon as possible - like 2 week's time? After all, wasn't this one of the major reasons for the strikes in the first place? But no: "national days of action" have been called for "protests" outside a selection of stations, to object

to the closures... But since the public consultation under Section 17 is with the "public", surely it leaves the union with only one possibility - that is strike - to make its objection, not just "known", but felt..?!

PS: Everyone knows that ticket offices are necessary... the bosses aren't closing them because they aren't needed, but because they don't want to pay for them. A public campaign to prove the already obvious, cannot substitute for our fight. [King's X Workers' Platform 12/07/23]

• Drivers want to keep fighting

Aslef drivers have heard nothing from the RDG bosses' group in response to the week-long overtime ban. No improved offer... Are they "not bothered" by what we are (not) doing? No question though, we think we need to up our game, no matter what Mick Whelan happens to think! We've renewed our mandate - we're ready to strike! [King's X Workers' Platform 12/07/23]

Letter from India

While the media focused on Modi's trip to the USA on the invitation of Biden and Elon Musk's praise for him ("*Modi really wants to do the right things for India ...*"), in India just weeks after the horrific Odisha train crash another railway crash almost resulted in disaster. And Modi's BJP provoked a genocidal war between Meitei and Kuki tribes in the north-eastern state of Manipur.

During Modi's trip to the USA, from 21-24 June, US President Biden had nothing but praise for their relationship, saying he was "*struck by our ability to find new areas of cooperation*". Portraying himself as a "*peace-loving Yogi*", Modi, the butcher of Gujarat who orchestrated the killing of more than a thousand people in 2002, spoke at a joint sitting of the House of Congress about "*democracy*", "*equality*" and "*dignity*" and received a standing ovation! The next day he taught yoga at the UN headquarters in Washington, after bowing in front of a statue of Mahatma Gandhi who was assassinated in 1949... by members of Modi's political organisation, the RSS! Of course, Modi is also close to Sunak, whose father-in-law NR Narayana Murthy is former CEO of Infosys, India's second largest IT company ...

The aftermath of the Odisha train crash

The official report into last month's train crash in Odisha which killed 288 people, was published on the 3 July. It found that the primary cause was a faulty signalling and track-interlocking system. This fault had been flagged by railway officials, but nothing was done due to a lack of maintenance staff. Indeed, with over 3 million railway job vacancies, safety staff cannot maintain the system. There is an 8-year backlog on replacing signalling gears! Moreover, managers have reduced "*block-times*" (when a section of track is blocked-off from rail traffic), rushing these workers to complete crucial signal repair work. This was a crash waiting to happen.

Rather than fill railway vacancies, Modi's BJP is trying to give the crash a communal angle while targeting railway workers. In the news and on social media, BJP activists have claimed (falsely) that there was a mosque at the site of the disaster,

Yogi Modi, another rail crash and genocidal violence in the north-east



Violence against Kukis in Manipur

that the station master had a Muslim name and that many "illegal" Rohingya Muslims live in the area, suggesting the crash was a result of "*sabotage*" and "*terrorism*"! And on 8 July, the Central Bureau of Investigation arrested two engineers and a technician for the crash... on the charge of culpable homicide.

The results of this negligence are predictable. Just three weeks after the Odisha train crash, two goods trains collided in West Bengal. The driver and his assistant, who had in the previous 18 trips done more than 14 night-shifts, and eight 12-hour trips, fell asleep and missed a signal. Rather than address the 9,000 driver vacancies in the railways, both drivers have been sacked. While no one was hurt this time, on another day the consequences of this crash could have been catastrophic.

The BJP and the violence in Manipur

Since May, 100 people have been killed and 50,000 displaced in clashes between tribal militias in the north-eastern Indian state of Manipur. This is the result of the BJP's attempts to turn the Meitei people against the Kuki tribe - who both inhabit the border regions of Manipur and Myanmar - so as to consolidate the right-wing Meitei vote and revive its own anti-migrant agenda in the run-up to the 2024 general election.

Since the 2021 military coup, Kuki refugees fleeing repression by Myanmar's military regime have crossed the Indo-Myanmar border into the Kuki-dominated hills of Manipur. The BJP state government has tried to stoke a xenophobic

reaction against this refugee influx, claiming that Meitei "*ancestral*" land is under threat from "*illegal, foreign*" Kukis.

The government has been demolishing Kuki villages since the beginning of the year - and has carried out "*verification drives*" to find "*illegal*" Kukis. Meitei right-wing Hindu organisations close to the RSS (the paramilitaries associated with Modi's BJP), such as Meitei Leppun and Arambai Tenggol (named after traditional Manipuri weapons) have demanded that a National Register of Citizens be drawn-up which would distinguish "*old Kukis*" (who were settled in Manipur before 1961) from "*new Kukis*". They also appealed to the High Court to declare the Meitei a "*Scheduled Tribe*", which would allow them to take over land in protected Kuki areas.

In this tense context, a violent attack on a Kuki protest march on 3 May triggered clashes between Meitei and Kuki armed groups across the state. The government allowed Meitei militias to loot army depots which were deliberately left unguarded. The 40,000 army personnel flown into this already highly-militarised state were instructed to let the bloodletting continue. Modi has refused to make any statement on the issue. He intends to use the occasion to revive the issue of the National Register of Citizens, his xenophobic project to identify and deport "*illegal*" immigrants right across the whole of India, in the run-up to the 2024 general election. Which the craven western media will cover as it always does, as a "*free ballot*" in the "*world's largest democracy*"... □

Colombia: the brutal rule of the state

For 60 years Colombia was more or less constantly in a state of civil war, as armed guerrillas like the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces), supported by the poorest sections of the peasantry, tried to take on the brutal and reactionary Colombian ruling class and in particular its big landowners. After the peace accords of 2016, the guerrilla armies were mostly disbanded. But now for the first time, the Colombian people are hearing some of the truth about what took place during these years - out of the mouth of 59-year-old Salvatore Mancuso, the leader of the main far-right paramilitary force known as the United Self-Defences of Colombia (AUC).

Squealing like a pig

Mancuso has finally been released from prison in the United States and is trying to make a case for being allowed to return to Colombia. He knows that a section of the Colombian ruling class would prefer to see him dead, so he has decided that his best chance of survival is to tell his version of the truth and point enough fingers at enough others to protect himself... to try to get a reduction in the jail-time he faces in Colombia for the atrocities committed by his militia.

Mancuso was himself a big landowner. From the mid-1990s to the time of his surrender in 2006, his AUC had killed an estimated 260,000 people. He was

promised immunity from prosecution by then president Alvaro Uribe Vélez, who had been elected in 2002, thanks to the help of paramilitaries allied to Mancuso. At the time, Colombia's high court ruled that he would have to "confess" to his crimes in order to benefit from a shorter sentence. So Uribe's government, fearful of what might come out in court, rushed to extradite him to the US which had already charged him with narco-trafficking.

Mancuso's confessions confirm that big business - including Uribe's family business, two agri-food companies Postobón and Bavaria and the largest Colombian oil company Ecopetrol, as well as cocaine trafficking, of course, helped finance his paramilitaries. At their bidding, the AUC carried out torture, targeted killings and massacres involving so many victims that bodies had to be burnt in cremation ovens or buried in mass graves, including in neighbouring Venezuela. Terrorising the population was a means to force poor farmers off their land into the cities, so that the guerrilla movement would lose its social base, but above all, so that big businesses could take it over.

The USA's helping hand

This intricate, tight network allowing the Colombian ruling class to use the services of the paramilitaries didn't come out of

International

the blue. In 1990, the Colombian state invited US, British and Israeli services to help "reshape" Colombia's "Organisation and Function of the Intelligence Networks", supposedly in order to fight the illegal narcotic trade.

It was primarily the US which intervened, under the notorious Colombian Armed Forces "Directive No. 200-05/91", which had nothing to do with a war against cocaine. Instead it helped to create a secret network that relied on paramilitaries, not only for intelligence, but to carry out targeted murder.

Indeed, Colombia's capitalist class, with the helping hand of the US intelligence services, literally armed itself with a gang of murderers who would stop at nothing to protect their interests against anyone who might dare to oppose their plunder... And that meant ridding itself of all opposition - whether civilian protesters, or armed guerrilla organisations in the jungle.

Today, Colombia may be enjoying a brief period of "social democracy" after elections last year were won by candidates who oppose the big landowners. Hence the very public confessions of Mancuso. But the poor majority - always in the firing line of the rich minority - already knew the "truth". The task of building a party representing their interests and capable of imposing them, still remains. □

Jenin: Israel's deadly attacks on the West Bank

In scenes reminiscent of Israel's large-scale invasion of the West Bank in 2002, on 3 July, the Israeli army attacked Jenin refugee camp, which covers less than half a square kilometre (0.2 square miles), but houses some 18,000 Palestinians. Prime Minister Netanyahu - now leading the most far-right government in Israel's history - boasted: "We operated in a very systemic way with large forces in one of the most concentrated and dense areas on the planet, and we were able to attack the terrorists while avoiding

civilian casualties".

The reality of course, is that this was a brutal and deliberately indiscriminate attack to inflict collective punishment on the population, which had been demanded by far-right Zionist settlers occupying Palestinian land "illegally", but with the sanction and support of the Israeli police and defence force. They used air cover to bomb and shell, sent overhead dozens of drones and then sent thousands of foot soldiers to invade the camp. Bulldozers followed, which tore up the camp's water supply and

destroyed a UN health centre. Twelve Palestinians were killed and hundreds were injured.

That this kind of collective punishment is reminiscent of what took place in Nazi concentration camps against Jewish inmates during WW2, makes it all the more horrific. But Netanyahu's self-proclaimed "fascist" allies in government have been calling for a large-scale military operation on the West Bank for months. Such operations - which are continuing - distract from the ever-growing demonstrations against judicial "reforms" which would give dictatorial powers to whoever leads the Israeli government.

Netanyahu knows he can continue with impunity, at least as far as his US masters and western allies are concerned, including Britain, which has long-since relegated any defence of Palestinian rights. But never mind. Sunak - and the neo-Zionist Starmer after him, will continue to pretend to uphold the right to self-determination, human rights, etc., while turning a blind eye to whatever Israeli forces perpetrate on the West Bank and in Gaza. The blood of the Palestinians is also on their hands.

Young Palestinians in the streets of Jenin



Ukraine war**US cluster bombs? Yet more carnage!**

It should come as no surprise that Washington is providing Zelensky's regime with cluster bombs. True, 15 years ago a "convention" against their use was drawn up, which 123 countries joined. A commitment to ban them completely was signed by 11 countries - including Britain and most of the EU. The US did not sign. And neither did Russia or Ukraine.

The US used cluster bombs in Iraq. Russia and Ukraine are already using them in the current war. The Ukrainian army denies their "use against civilians", but Human Rights Watch documented their use in the Russian-occupied town of Iziom in March-April last year, where several civilians were blown up. At the time, the Ukrainians were complaining bitterly about their "illegal" use by the Russians and western media produced several reports to verify the Ukrainian deaths and injuries they had caused. But "all's fair in war"... indeed, what real meaning has a description of one or other weapon - or indeed the war itself - as "legal" or "illegal"?



Cluster munitions are deliberately designed to be indiscriminate, targeting anyone and everyone, whether civilian or military. They open in mid-air and disperse hundreds of small bomb fragments, which then cover a huge area, acting as little landmines, posing a threat to anyone who stumbles on them for years, if not decades, unless cleared by experts. And by the way, landmines are also being used extensively in this

war, by both sides, despite conventions against their use...

And then there's the wording of President Joe Biden's "determination" that "the transfer of cluster munitions to Ukraine was necessary for the national security interests of the United States" (our italics), revealing explicitly, for once and for all, that it is the US which is the real protagonist in this war "against Putin". ☐

For a world without NATO!

The main item on the agenda of NATO's summit in Lithuania on 11 July was Sweden's admission to this US-led warmongers' club. It had been held up for many years to objections by Turkey, which considered that Swedish governments were too "soft" on the president's sworn "enemy", i.e., the Kurdish people - whose claim to civil rights, let alone a homeland, he denies and whom he designates as "terrorists". But finally Turkey relented. True, the right-wing Swedish government, unlike its more social democratic predecessors, is not so sympathetic to Kurdish or any

other refugees. But President Erdogan also had in mind Turkey's pending application to join the EU, also held up for years (it first applied to join the European Economic Community in 1987!) due to its "human rights" record.

Now, since Erdogan has agreed to be fully on board with NATO's pro-Ukrainian stance (breaking his apparent pact with Putin), it is possible (but not certain) that this EU membership may be expedited. Not only that, but the F16 aircraft which he ordered from the US and which were previously on hold, may now be delivered... So never mind

the hundreds of political prisoners and journalists imprisoned by Erdogan's paranoid authoritarian regime (a military dictatorship, always in the waiting) or the fact that his state is based on a form of Islamic law which denies women full social equality. When it comes to the naked self-interest of imperialist capital - with the USA crowned king - "conventions" and laws which protect human rights or the rights of women against domestic violence, etc., are irrelevant. Which says it all about this thieves' kitchen called NATO. ☐

Their profitable destruction and reconstruction

Companies are vying for Ukraine's reconstruction contracts. There's much to rebuild: 149,300 residential buildings, 330 hospitals, 595 administrative buildings and more than 3,000 schools and university buildings have been damaged or destroyed, by last count. A "Ukraine Recovery Conference" held in London on 21-22 June was the latest in the series, with the aim of ensuring investments in Ukraine are "western", rather than "eastern".

In his video #AdvantageUkraine, played at the opening of the New

York Stock Exchange last September, Zelensky called Ukraine's reconstruction the "biggest opportunity since the Second World War", inviting investors to "to share the victory (against Russia) with us". It's already called the "new" Marshall Plan. US firms BlackRock and JP Morgan have set up an investment fund. Contracts are signed for agri-processing with American, German, and French companies (Corteva, Bayer and Lidea). Ukraine's public companies have been privatised. Exemption for investors from all kinds of taxes are announced.

Officials told the Financial Times that "The country's ... relatively cheap labour means it can fill a supply gap in manufacturing and processing as the EU tries to diversify from China". Last year, zero-hour contracts were legalised. Ministers promise "ease of hiring and firing, severance pay, flexible hours and contracts". They assume that the Ukrainian working class, after sacrificing itself in this war, will accept these attacks on its livelihood and working conditions. But that is highly unlikely. ☐

In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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