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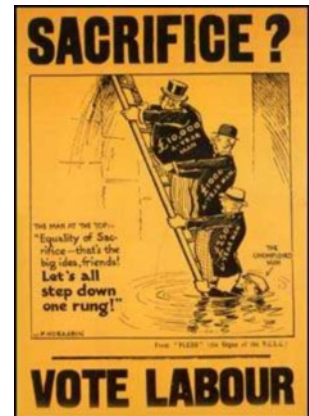
June 2023

Small businesses and unions have hit back at the Bank of England's chief economist saying people need to accept they are poorer otherwise prices will keep soaring.



Huw Pill is Chief Economist at the Bank of England and earns £190,000 per year.

A 1931 poster criticizing the hypocrisy of calling for the poor to accept less.



Huw Pill said a game of "pass the parcel" of workers asking for wage rises and businesses passing on higher costs was fuelling inflation.

He added there was a "reluctance to accept" households were worse off.

But the Federation of Small Businesses said his comments were "out of touch".

Tina McKenzie, policy chair of the trade body, said small firms had been left with no choice to pass on the "huge increases they have seen for energy and input costs" to customers.

"In many cases even that is not enough to fill the gap," she added.

Ms McKenzie said many firms who are "only just hanging on day by day", were not able to invest and were cutting costs.

Amanda Gearing, a senior organiser for the GMB union, said it was "absolutely outrageous to be honest, asking some of our lowest paid workers in this country, not to take a pay increase when inflation is so high".

"People can't afford to live, they're not able to pay their rent or put food on the table," she told the BBC's Today programme.

Paul Nowak, the TUC general secretary, added people didn't "need lectures" over pay and called for a plan to "make sure workers get their fair share".

- People 'need to accept' they're poorer, says Bank
- Don't ask for a big pay rise, warns Bank boss

UK inflation, which is a measure of the increase in price of something over time, hit 10.1% in the year to March.

For example, if a pint of milk cost £1 but went up to £1.10 a year later, then annual milk inflation is 10%. March's inflation figure was slightly lower than February but the fall does not mean prices are coming down, it means they are rising at a slightly slower pace.

Part of the Bank of England's role is to try to keep inflation at its target rate of 2%. The Bank, which is the UK's central bank, is charged with setting interest rates and in response to the inflation rate going up in recent times, its officials have increased interest rates - which make the cost of borrowing money more expensive for people and businesses.

This strategy, in theory, is meant to make people spend less so that demand for goods reduces and prices slow down or even fall.

But with the strain of rising prices being felt by households trying to pay higher energy bills and food costs, many people have asked for pay rises to help ease the cost of living.

People working across several industries, such as rail, the NHS and the civil service, have gone on strike in recent months over various reasons including pay.

And with job vacancies still being higher than they have been in previous years, workers have had a stronger hand in asking their employers for more money.

'Reluctance to accept'

Mr Pill, who made £95,183, including benefits, in his first six months at the Bank, is paid more than £190,000 a year.

He told the Beyond Unprecedented podcast from Columbia Law School that people demanding higher pay and businesses passing on increased costs by putting prices up, added to inflation and caused prices to rise even further across the economy.

He said what the UK imports from other countries, such as natural gas, was costing a lot more than what it exports.

"You don't need to be much of an economist to realise that if what you're buying has gone up a lot relative to what you're selling, you're going to be worse off," he said.

"Somehow in the UK, someone needs to accept that they're worse off and stop trying to maintain their real spending power by bidding up prices, whether through higher wages or passing energy costs on to customers."

He added: "What we're facing now is that reluctance to accept that. That pass-the-parcel game that's going on here, that game is one that's generating inflation, and that part of inflation can persist."

Huw Pill, Chief Economist at the Bank of England and Executive Director for Monetary Analysis and Research. He is a member of the bank's Monetary Policy Committee. Image source, Alamy

Thomas Moore, senior investment director at Abrdn, told BBC 5Live Mr Pill's words "need to accept" were a "red rag to the bull".

But he added: "You can see that underlying all of this, he has got a point which is as long as inflation stays high, we are going to demand higher wages and as long as we demand higher wages, inflation is going to stay high."

But although pay has been going up, it has not matched inflation, meaning people are worse off.

There have been arguments by some economists that employers giving out large pay rises could spark a "wage-price" spiral, when pay increases help force prices up and high inflation lasts for a longer time.

Other stories:

This isn't wage-price inflation, it's greedflation – and big companies are to blame | Larry Elliott

Our New Deal for Workers is the only way forward



In light of new research that shows low-paid workers are worse off than ever, Usdaw general secretary PADDY LILLIS explains why his union is renewing its call for action on pay, contracts and employment rights

THE cost-of-living crisis has hit working people hard. Workers who were on the front line, keeping our country going during the coronavirus pandemic, have seen their living standards squeezed and their families suffer as wages have failed to keep up with soaring bills and sky-rocketing costs.

Usdaw's latest cost-of-living survey of 7,500 low-paid key workers found that 83 per cent feel financially worse off than last year, almost two in three have struggled to pay gas and electricity bills and nearly three in four reported that financial worries are having an impact on their mental health.

At the heart of this cost-of-living crisis is a lack of decent employment rights: low-paid workers are particularly vulnerable to having their hours, wages or terms and conditions cut.

Usdaw is clear that workers must be given greater rights and protections, through a New Deal for Workers.

Our New Deal for Workers campaign emerged in 2020 in response to the incredible work of our members during the pandemic. The cost-of-living crisis has created further hardship and that is why we need urgent action on the campaign's demands.

Usdaw is calling for an immediate increase in the minimum wage to at least £12 per hour for all workers, as a step towards £15.

Every worker deserves a wage they can live on, so we also need to end the rip-off youth rates that allow employers to pay young workers as little as £5.28 per hour. Workers should be paid the same wage for doing the same job, irrespective of age.

A higher minimum wage only tackles low pay if workers get the hours they need, so we need a minimum contract of 16 hours per week for all those who want it, along with a right to a "normal hours" contract.

Short-hours contracts are common, yet many routinely work far more hours than they are contracted to. This creates uncertainty and insecurity for workers because all the flexibility is with the employer.

Those regularly working over their contracted hours, should have those hours guaranteed in their contract if they want them to be. The government also needs to ban zero-hours contracts once and for all.

The pandemic proved that statutory sick pay (SSP) is fundamentally broken. It is not enough to live on and so most people cannot afford to be ill.

SSP needs to be paid from day one, at an individual's normal rate of pay and to all workers.

Alongside this we need a fundamental overhaul and proper funding of universal credit, to ensure our social security system provides a genuine safety net. The pandemic has shown that anybody can suddenly find themselves needing help.

Our members face shocking levels of violence, threats and abuse. That is why we are calling for better legal protection for everyone in Britain, making it a specific offence to abuse public-facing workers, with a sentence that fits the crime.

We also need stronger protections against redundancy and dismissal from day one of employment, alongside proper consultation when new technology is introduced in the workplace and investment in skills so workers can adapt to a changing workplace.

Everyone deserves equal pay and treatment at work. Nobody should be discriminated against due to their gender, race, disability, sexual orientation or other protected characteristics — and these workers make up the majority of our members.

The issues that matter to them are the issues that matter to Usdaw, to our campaigning, organising and bargaining agendas.

The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis have both shown how workers need their unions now more than ever.

We need workers to have a stronger voice at work, through strengthened trade union rights. Workplace reps have an essential role supporting for members.

Udaw's New Deal for Workers campaign will only be delivered through well-trained and supported reps in workplaces up and down the country, the foundation of any union.

Udaw believes that the new deal should apply to all workers, not just those where we have a recognition agreement.

While we will remain committed to delivering improvements through collective bargaining, we can only achieve improvements for all workers through political means.

Only a future Labour government is committed to scrapping anti-union legislation, delivering a new deal for workers and growing trade unionism across the country.

Our New Deal for Workers campaign goals are ambitious and will only be fully achieved through effective workplace organising, high levels of membership — and securing a Labour government that listens to the needs of working people.

Covid: the shambles continues:

The Treasury should be on Covid trial alongside Johnson and Sunak

Richard Murphy

As The Observer notes this morning: 4/6/23

Rishi Sunak is facing a barrage of criticism in the run-up to the official Covid-19 inquiry as a leading scientist attacks his “spectacularly stupid” Eat Out to Help Out scheme, which is believed to have caused a sudden rise in cases of the virus.

They add:

The president of the British Medical Association, Prof Martin McKee, also criticises the “dysfunctional” way in which the government, including the Treasury under Sunak, overlooked scientific advice throughout the pandemic.

The evidence that the Treasury did not have a good Covid era is growing.

The description of ‘Eat out to help out’ noted above may be too kind.

It is now apparent - and confirmed by Matt Hancock - that book-balancing was, as ever, the Treasury goal during this period. People have always featured very low on their list of priorities, even when it comes to matters of life and death.

And let's be blunt, the furlough and loan schemes were recklessly mismanaged with even the most basic checks on whether payrolls and even companies existed being ignored so keen were the Treasury to subsidise business rather than save lives.

It can be argued that none of this was Sunak's fault. He had only just arrived, and then as a deeply inexperienced minister promoted way too fast and probably beyond his ability (not for the first time) due to Sajid Javid's falling out with Johnson. But life is not fair like that to ministers. It is assumed you have the ability to master a complex brief quickly if you are given a role. There is no honeymoon period.

And Sunak knew enough about the Treasury by then to know the beast he was taking on. The cold-hearted creator of mayhem in the UK economy in the 1930s was still in place, ready to roll out its indifference to human suffering yet again. And Sunak let it do that. And we have all paid a price in some way.

So, Sunak deserves to be on Covid trial. But so too does the Treasury. It ignored the evidence, prudence, good governance and straightforward need and did its own hopeless things, so usual. It really is time that it was brought down to earth. It is not the home of the gods. It is the temple of doom, and that's why it needs to be pulled down and rebuilt in a much modified form.

Battle to withhold Covid messages is about much more than Boris Johnson

Rowena Mason- The Guardian



Rishi Sunak must weigh up how it would look for his government to try to conceal material from a government-commissioned inquiry

Why would ministers fight tooth and nail to prevent the release of Boris Johnson's uncensored WhatsApps and diaries, and the correspondence of a relatively anonymous former political aide called Henry Cook?

Rishi Sunak has little interest in protecting his No 10 predecessor and rival from any embarrassment. His relationship with Johnson remains almost as strained as when they were neighbours in Downing Street, and Sunak is now reluctant even to pick up the phone to Johnson for a rapprochement.

Johnson has said he is willing for all his material to be sent to the inquiry uncensored, as has his former health secretary Matt Hancock.

However, the Sunak administration's battle to withhold the information is about far more than Johnson, despite the former prime minister's domination of the headlines.

In fact, this fight is entirely about the wider consequences for No 10 and the Conservatives if they agree to hand over unredacted information about the pandemic to Heather Hallett's inquiry.

This could mean all kinds of text messages, WhatsApps, emails, minutes, notes and diaries of numerous other ministers, aides and officials avoid the red pen of the government's lawyers and ultimately make their way into the public domain.

Sunak himself is the most prominent member of the government whose Covid-era material could end up having to be handed over unredacted. Other serving cabinet ministers who were around in the Johnson era include Oliver Dowden, the deputy prime minister; Suella Braverman, the home secretary; Michael Gove, the levelling up secretary; Thérèse Coffey, the environment secretary; and Grant Shapps, the energy secretary. Simon Case, the cabinet secretary – the UK's most senior civil servant – was running No 10 at the time.

The remaining unanswered questions about decision-making during the pandemic are endless. There is still little visibility around how lockdowns and restrictions were decided, who took the decisions, how closely the politicians listened to their scientific advisers and, importantly, whether Sunak ever believed that economic considerations trumped public health advice.

Hancock's correspondence, injudiciously handed to the journalist Isabel Oakeshott and then passed to the Telegraph, give us a flavour of the kind of casual communications that were common during the pandemic. That is a drop in the ocean compared with the wealth of material that Hallet's inquiry is seeking.

If the government backs down in relation to Johnson and Cook, it will have to take a similar approach to all this other material as well. And this is why many Whitehall observers believe the row is now likely to end up in a judicial review.

There is a fundamental disagreement between the government and the inquiry's "redaction protocol", which makes clear it believes that its own lawyers – not those of the government legal department – should be in charge of what is deemed relevant.

Some Tories and former civil servants, such as the former cabinet secretary Robin Butler, believe it may be possible to come to a compromise, with greater dialogue between the government and the inquiry over what redactions will be made.

However, the gap between the inquiry's position and the government's seems extremely wide. In weighing up whether to seek a judicial review, Sunak will need to consider how it would look for his administration to try to conceal material from an inquiry that the government itself commissioned and a retired judge it appointed.

There is a risk now for the prime minister that the whole process could lose credibility as a vehicle for establishing the truth about how the Covid pandemic was handled – even if he were to win on a point of law.

Some former ministers involved in the pandemic response are frustrated at the lack of transparency and the implication that there is anything to conceal.

No 10 will now have to decide what is a worse look for Sunak: a potential exposure of chaotic or incompetent decision-making during Johnson's era, or a reluctance by his own administration to face up to the truth.

Government must not withhold evidence from Covid Public Inquiry - TUC

Revealed: Government's fight to withhold evidence from Covid-19 inquiry- Open Democracy

Ghana patients in danger as nurses head for NHS in UK - medics



Fewer nurses in Ghana means that critical care for patients there is being affected, medics say with lower immunisation and higher mortality rates.

The recruitment of nurses by high-income countries from poorer nations is "out of control", according to the head of one of the world's biggest nursing groups.

The comments come as the BBC finds evidence of how Ghana's health system is struggling due to the "brain-drain".

Many specialist nurses have left the West African country for better paid jobs overseas.

In 2022 more than 1,200 Ghanaian nurses joined the UK's nursing register.

This comes as the National Health Service (NHS) increasingly relies on staff from non-EU countries to fill vacancies.

Although the UK says active recruitment in Ghana is not allowed, social media means nurses can easily see the vacancies available in NHS trusts. They can then apply for those jobs directly. Ghana's dire economic situation acts as a big push factor.

Howard Catton from the International Council of Nurses (ICN) is concerned about the scale of the numbers leaving countries like Ghana.

"My sense is that the situation currently is out of control," he told the BBC.

"We have intense recruitment taking place mainly driven by six or seven high-income countries but with recruitment from countries which are some of the weakest and most vulnerable which can ill-afford to lose their nurses."

The head of nursing at Greater Accra Regional Hospital, Gifty Aryee, told the BBC her Intensive Care Unit alone had lost 20 nurses to the UK and US in the last six months - with grave implications.

"Care is affected as we are not able to take any more patients. There are delays and it costs more in mortality - patients die," she said.

She added that seriously ill patients often had to be held for longer in the emergency department due to the nursing shortages.

One nurse in the hospital estimated that half of those she had graduated with had left the country - and she wanted to join them.

All our experienced nurses gone'

The BBC found a similar situation at Cape Coast Municipal Hospital.

The hospital's deputy head of nursing services, Caroline Agbodza, said she had seen 22 nurses leave for the UK in the last year. "All our critical care nurses, our experienced nurses, have gone. So we end up having nothing - no experienced staff to work with. Even if the government recruits, we have to go through the pain of training nurses again."

Smaller clinics are also affected by staff migration because even one nurse leaving a small health centre can have a large knock-on effect.

At Ewim Health Clinic in Cape Coast, one nurse has left their small emergency department and another has left the outpatients unit. Both nurses were experienced and had found jobs in the UK.

The chief doctor there, Dr Justice Arthur, said the effects were enormous.

"Let's take services like immunisation of children. If we lose public health nurses, then the babies that have to be immunised will not get their immunisation and we are going to have babies die," he told the BBC.

He said adult patients would also die if there were not enough nurses to look after them after surgery.

Most of the nurses that the BBC team spoke to wanted to leave Ghana due to the fact they could earn more elsewhere.

At Kwaso healthcare centre near the city of Kumasi, Mercy Asare Afriyie explained that she was hoping to find a job in the UK soon.

"The exodus of nurses is not going to stop because of our poor conditions of service. Our salary is nothing to write home about and in two weeks you spend it. It's from hand to mouth."

Ghanaian nurses told the BBC that in the UK they could earn more than seven times what they are receiving in Ghana.

Perpetual Ofori-Ampofo from Ghana's Nurses and Midwives Association said her country's healthcare system needed more help.

"If you look at the numbers, then it is not ethical for the UK to recruit from Ghana because the numbers of professional nurses compared to trainee or auxiliary nurses is a problem for us," she said.

But she added that it was not possible to stop nurses from leaving as migration was a right and that the Ghanaian government needed to do more to persuade them to stay. The health ministry in the capital, Accra, declined to comment.

Ghana is on the World Health Organization's list of 55 vulnerable countries, which have low numbers of nurses per head of population. The list - dubbed by some as the "red list" - is designed to discourage systematic recruitment in these countries.

The UK government recently gave £15m (\$18.6m) to Ghana, Nigeria and Kenya to help boost their healthcare workforces.

But the country is known to be looking at brokering a formal deal with Ghana whereby it might be able to recruit more proactively in return for giving the government there a sum of money per nurse.

It already has a similar agreement with Nepal.

But the ICN's Mr Catton questioned whether it was enough.

He told the BBC that he believed such deals were "trying to create a veneer of ethical respectability rather than a proper reflection of the true costs to the countries which are losing their nurses".

The WHO's Director of Health Workforce, Jim Campbell, explained to the BBC that Brexit had been a factor in the UK turning to African countries for nurses to fill NHS vacancies.

"The labour market is extremely competitive around the world and, having closed off the potential labour market from European freedom of movement, what we're seeing is the consequences of that in terms of attracting people from the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions."

Dozens of NHS doctors are stranded in Sudan after being denied evacuation to the UK.



A Foreign and Commonwealth Rapid Response team member helps evacuees as British citizens board an RAF aircraft in Sudan. Getty Images

The Sudanese Junior Doctor Association said 74 doctors who hold British visas to live and work in Britain had been told they were not eligible for evacuation because they are not UK passport holders.

The association's Nadia Baasher told BBC's Newsnight: "The issue here, and what's been disappointing to us, is the evacuation has been very sporadic and very ambitious.

"There hasn't been any information as to, and unfortunately doctors with BRPs [biometric residence permit] have been denied [permission] to board the evacuation [flights].

"Those who hold the BRP or biometric residencies are doctors who have lived here for four or five years, some of them even longer. They work in the NHS. They have seen the country through a pandemic. They are A&E doctors, they are GPs, surgeons, medics. Their lives are here. They have children in school here. They are taxpayers.

"They went to Sudan because of the Eid and Ramadan celebrations, which conveniently coincided with the Easter holidays, so people managed to go. So there are a lot of families with young children at the moment, which is causing a lot of difficulties at the airbase."

US leads nations urging citizens to leave Sudan as fighting intensifies

The British Medical Association has also called on the government to evacuate non-British NHS doctors, saying it has a "duty of care" to ensure their safety in Sudan.

Dr Latifa Patel, representative body chair for the British Medical Association, told the Independent: "We are calling on the government to ensure that these doctors, who are invaluable to the UK's health service, are able to get to safety.

"The situation in Sudan is fluid and as such we do not know exact numbers, but our colleagues at the Sudanese Junior Doctors Association UK estimate that approximately 74 NHS doctors are trapped in Sudan.

"The government has a duty of care to ensure the safety of these NHS doctors who work hard to care for patients in the UK – NHS doctors who are not British passport holders must not be left behind."

Downing Street has rejected calls from people, including Foreign Affairs Committee chairwoman Alicia Keans, to widen the eligibility for evacuation beyond British passport holders and their immediate families.

But the prime minister's official spokesman said: "There is an element of discretion for people on the ground as you might expect, given the circumstances and the challenging situation people will be facing.

"We recognise these are very challenging circumstances and, as we have done on previous occasions, we obviously empower people on the ground to make decisions."

On Thursday night, Foreign Secretary James Cleverly reiterated a call for all UK citizens wishing to flee Sudan to come forward "as quickly as possible" after an extension to the ceasefire was agreed following talks mediated by the so-called Quad countries – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

The RAF has flown out nearly 900 people from an airfield near the capital Khartoum, but thousands more British citizens may remain in Sudan.

Flights were scheduled to continue regardless but intensified clashes would add extra pressure to the operation and Mr Cleverly had warned that the mission could become impossible.

But the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces joined the Sudanese military in agreeing to extend the 72-hour truce that has meant a lull in the fighting to allow citizens and foreign nationals to flee.

Mr Cleverly said: "The UK calls for its full implementation by the generals.

"British evacuation flights are ongoing.

"I urge all British nationals wishing to leave to proceed to the airport as quickly as possible to ensure their safety."

Britain had been urging the rival generals to extend the ceasefire, which should help stave off a humanitarian crisis in Africa's third-largest country.

More than 2,000 British citizens in Sudan have registered under the evacuation plans but the true number of citizens there could be far higher.

As of 4pm on Thursday, 897 people had been evacuated on eight RAF flights.

The Foreign Office, which has not said how many of the evacuees are Britons or foreign nationals, had been urging citizens to head to the airstrip before the ceasefire ended.

Military chiefs say they have the capacity to fly at least 500 people per day out of the Wadi Saeedna airfield, north of Khartoum.

Earlier in the day, Mr Cleverly warned that resumption of fighting could jeopardise the evacuation efforts.

"We cannot predict exactly what will happen when that ceasefire ends, but what we do know is it will be much, much harder, potentially impossible," he told Sky News.

"So, what we're saying to British nationals is if you're hesitant, if you're weighing up your options, our strong, strong advice is to go through Wadi Saeedna whilst the ceasefire is up and running.

"There are planes, there is capacity, we will lift you out. I'm not able to make those same assurances once a ceasefire has ended."

UK passport holders have been told to make their own way to the airfield and are not being provided with a military escort.

Africa minister Andrew Mitchell warned that an end to the ceasefire could result in a humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan.

"It is essential that a ceasefire is maintained and that a political process is secured," he told the foreign affairs think tank Chatham House.

"If not, the humanitarian consequences will be incalculable."

Meanwhile, the ambassador of Saudi Arabia to the UK has said there will be no "no instant solution" to the conflict in Sudan, but efforts by the so-called Quad group of countries to negotiate a peaceful settlement continue.

Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Sultan said on Friday the Quad – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, and the United States – had negotiated an extension to the ceasefire and work was ongoing to negotiate a permanent end to the war.

“There's a lot to discuss. It's premature to give you a final solution to what Sudan will look like going forward in a peaceful sense.

“But it's important to include everyone, you can't pick one side and say, 'Well, you're not part of the solution.' Everyone is engaged,” he told BBC Radio 4's Today show on Friday.

He added: “There is no instant solution. It is going to be a progression of events that lead to where we'd like to get to.”

The ambassador said Saudi Arabia had so far evacuated more than 2,700 people from the war-torn country.

And it would continue its efforts to get people out as long as it was safe to do so.

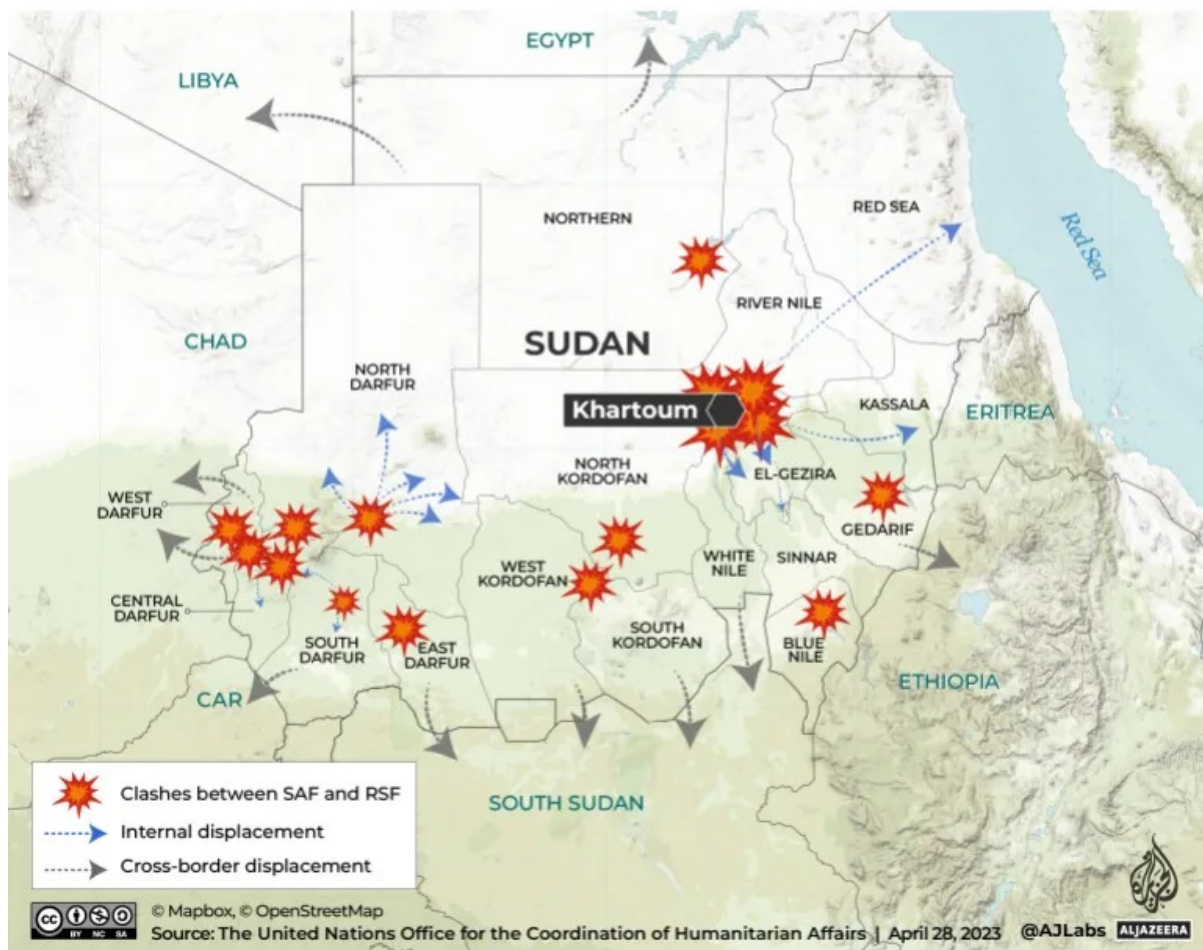
“We will continue evacuating people in partnership with our friends and allies around the world.

“That will continue as long as it's safe for people to get to Port Sudan and it's safe for the often forgotten military players in this, who also risk their lives to get people across.”

SUDAN

Mapping the crisis

The Sudanese army and the paramilitary RSF have been fighting for 14 days, killing more than 500 people and injuring at least 4,000. The UN estimates 50,000 people have fled Sudan, while the number of internally displaced is yet to be determined.



Sudan: proxy war or revolution

The popular resistance and revolution of 2019 have been subverted by two warring military factions supported from abroad – it is time for Sudan to return to civilian rule, writes AMEENA AL-RASHID

THE conflict that began on April 8 between Sudan's military and the country's main paramilitary force is a proxy war against the Sudanese people, backed by regional and international powers, who have enabled the warring factions to acquire wealth and weapons.

It is a war between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by General Mohamed Hamdan Daglo (aka "Hemeti") and the security committee of the National Islamic Front in the Sudanese military headed by Abdel Fattah Abdelrahman al-Burhan — both sides supported by their foreign allies.

In a speech to the Sudanese people, Hemeti bragged openly that he had the most sophisticated weapons — he was not buying cheap weapons, he was buying the best from the best.

This is the same "Janjaweed" militia that was indicted in 2004 by UN security council resolution 1556 for committing genocide in Darfur.

It is the same militia that committed other atrocities at the sit-in at the military HQ in Khartoum on June 3 2019. The international community's memory appears completely blank.

The RSF got its first leg up from the EU, during the "Khartoum process," officially known as the EU-Horn of Africa Migration Route Initiative.

Launched in late 2014 by European countries, African states and the African Union, this gave Hemeti military support, power and money to stop migrants from crossing from Libya to the Mediterranean and into Europe.

The RSF used that money. It committed crimes and violations of rights that the whole international community has kept quiet about.

Hemeti's more recent ally is Russia. He was invited to Moscow and met Vladimir Putin. He has had the Wagner Group, the Russian paramilitary organisation, supporting him and training his militia.

Omar al-Bashir, the former president who was deposed in 2019, sent the RSF to Yemen to support the Saudi war on the Yemeni people. They committed violations in Libya, and against refugees from Eritrea and Ethiopia. They have started looting and terrorising civilians now in Sudan.

Sudan is under siege from this militia — it kills people everywhere.

For his part, Burhan, the head of the military junta, and head of the security committee of Muslim Brotherhood in the Sudanese Army, is a regular visitor to Egypt, the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

He's been taking orders from them. We know that they are pilfering Sudanese resources: they loot and smuggle Sudanese gold and agricultural products.

In 2019, when the military junta led by Burhan took control of the country, he employed the RSF to violently crack down on pro-democracy demonstrators, alongside his "shadow brigade," the Islamist Armed Group.

In October 2021 all pretence at a "civilian transition" was abandoned. Burhan dissolved the transitional government, arrested civilian leaders and installed himself in power, with Hemeti his right-hand man. That was then — now they are at war.

If you are looking for catalysts for this war, it is worth noting that when the popular resistance committees in the north stopped the trade between Sudan and Egypt, it affected the Egyptians severely.

It stopped the looting of lots of resources. This eventually harmed the alliance between the RSF, the military junta and their foreign allies.

This war is deeply affecting the Sudanese people, who are the victims of atrocities, brutality and torture at the hands of these two powers. It will change their lives forever. And there is a risk of a wider conflict. We have already even seen the conflict spill over into the internal affairs of neighbouring countries.

Hemeti is now standing by the Ethiopians on the disputed al-Fashaqa region that was “liberated” by his rival Burhan in November 2020.

The two warring military factions are competing over who will monopolise power in Sudan and who will seize control of the resources in the country; this all-out struggle is to protect their economic and financial power built up over 30 years by the regime of Omar al-Bashir.

They still control big companies, banks and money looted from banks and institutions of Sudan.

The threat of a return to a civilian government that followed the revolution of December 2019 severely weakened the position of the military factions — they now try to derail the revolution by all means at their disposal and maintain control.

For Sudan is a big country. It has a strategic position. And it is richer than most people imagine. We have gold, minerals and massive agricultural potential.

Sudan’s wealth could build the country and create prosperity and development for the Sudanese people. But this wealth is plundered. Our gold has been repeatedly smuggled out.

The Sudanese resistance committee has videos and documents that show the Wagner Group smuggling gold and Egyptian trucks smuggling gold too.

The truces announced in recent days are just buying time for each one of the warring sides. Neither side is abiding by the ceasefires. The warring parties should abide by what they promised the international community.

But the RSF is not an organised army, despite being considered part of the Sudanese military. From day one, they started looting and attacking people in their own houses. Even if the ceasefire works in certain parts of the country, it will not be respected everywhere.

It is now reaching a point where they might not give in to each other at all until one of them takes over. The people are starting to suffer severely. Thousands of people are leaving their homes and trying to find a safe haven. This is the third or fourth genocide against them by an uncontrollable militia, and an army and military men from the Islamic Front, from the ousted regime.

We now see the repercussions of having military bases in the cities, in Khartoum, in Marawi, close to civilians. The military must be removed from the cities.

The majority of Sudanese people are calling for an end to this war. This is not their war. This is a war for resources and power and vested interests.

The people are calling for the formation of an alliance against the war, and the restoration of civilian government, for the army to go to the barracks and for the militia to be dissolved.

But that is just the start. The Sudanese revolution must continue. It is a very progressive revolution that calls for people’s control of their wealth.

We call for the path of economic development, building a public sector that is strong and that serves the people. You’ll find enemies everywhere when you do this — multinational companies and those that have interests in the corporate world and finance.

How can the “international community” help? The UN is playing a good role, but it is not effective. It has not been able to bring people together to have a comprehensive agreement that everybody can agree on.

The framework agreement brokered by the UN and signed in December 2022 between civilian political forces and the military served only the interests of Hemeti and the small “liberation” armies.

It excluded many people and forces and did not include key demands of the revolution. This is why the military junta couldn’t establish any government.

The UN needs to get a grip on Sudan’s political map in order to include everybody; it must prioritise an agenda that the Sudanese people care about and build a comprehensive agreement among all the people who contributed to this revolution.

The Sudanese Communist Party must be part of it, including the other forces who support the party’s position and call for radical change. The revolution was built on solid slogans and demands that were developed by Sudanese activists, members of the Communist Party and other progressive groups.

Britain should immediately side with the Sudanese people’s demands: the demands of the revolution for freedom peace and justice, for an all-inclusive civilian rule that can preserve their rights and build a national army that protects the state and the citizens.

Britain should stop supporting the military, the army in the country, or any other militia forces. Just a few years before the collapse of Bashir’s military junta, Britain still trained his security forces.

This war will end eventually, and once it does, this must also be the end of these two military powers destroying Sudan.

The Sudanese people will not settle for another dictator, and they have had enough of foreign alliances that distort the country to serve their interests and trample on the people’s rights.

I hope that the people of the world will support the Sudanese people on the path to civilian rule to stop this war, a proxy war by international and regional forces, and ensure they take their hands off Sudan and start listening to the people’s demands.

Ameena al-Rashid is a Sudanese activist and political analyst.

What is happening in Sudan? A simple guide

EU accused of propping up Sudan's ‘militia state’ in bid to block migrants

EU Parliamentarian Shames Europe for Funding Sudan's Civil War While Crying for Peace

The complexities of imperialism on the African continent

RAF Lakenheath: US nuclear weapons return to Britain

CND condemns any return of United States nuclear weapons to RAF Lakenheath in Suffolk. 110 nuclear bombs were stored at the airbase until they were removed in 2008 following persistent popular protest, and they must not be allowed back.

Response to war

Tensions are rising across Europe amidst the ongoing war in Ukraine. In response to the Russian invasion, reports are circulating that the US is preparing to store some of its nuclear weapons in the UK. This originated with the fact that the US Department of Defense has added the UK to a list of NATO nuclear weapons storage locations in Europe being upgraded under a multimillion-dollar infrastructure programme. The UK was not on the comparable list for the previous year, so this looks like a very recent decision.

Experts now believe the base in question is RAF Lakenheath, located just 100 km from London.

History repeats itself

While it is not yet known if nuclear weapons have already been returned to the base, or if NATO is in the process of preparing the base to be ready to receive them, this development marks a change in the nuclear status of RAF Lakenheath.

RAF Lakenheath hosted US nuclear weapons for more than five decades, first arriving in September 1954. CND arranged protests at the base alongside the Lakenheath Action Group, including days of action where hundreds of people descended on the base. Direct action activists broke into the base and locked on to the gates of the ammunition depot, preventing access for hours. Messages of support were shared between campaigners at other US bases in Europe, and from Faslane, where Britain's nuclear weapons are stationed. Plays were presented outside the base, and letters handed in to the Commander.

Following years of protesting, the nuclear weapons were eventually removed in 2008, but not before nuclear accidents endangered the safety of the local community.

Nuclear accidents

At least two major incidents involving nuclear weapons are known to have occurred at RAF Lakenheath.

In 1956 a B-47 bomber on a routine training mission crashed into a storage unit containing nuclear weapons, killing four servicemen. Official US documents declared it was a 'miracle' that none of the bombs detonated, and that 'it is possible that a part of Eastern England would have become a desert'. Five years later, an airplane loaded with a nuclear bomb caught fire following pilot error. The bomb was 'scorched and blistered', and scientists later discovered it could have detonated in slightly different circumstances.

Both incidents were covered up by the US and British governments, only being admitted in 1979 and 2003 respectively.

Nuclear-sharing

By the time of the weapons' removal in 2008, the Lakenheath site had 33 underground storage vaults and stored around 110 B-61 gravity bombs that could be dropped from F-15E warplanes based there.

Lakenheath received the latest nuclear-capable fighter – the F-35A – in 2021 and a total of 24 F-35As are expected to be based there eventually. Training with the latest B61-12 guided nuclear bomb will commence within the year.

Despite being called an RAF station, Lakenheath is run by the United States Air Force (USAF) and currently only hosts USAF units and personnel, leading many campaigners to describe it as USAF Lakenheath. The host wing is the 48th Fighter Wing (48 FW), also known as the Liberty Wing, assigned to

United States Air Forces in Europe – Air Forces Africa (USAFE-AFAFRICA). The wing operates the F-15C/D Eagle, F-15E Strike Eagle and F-35A Lightning II. With around 6,000 personnel on the base, it is the largest deployment of USAF personnel in Britain.

US nuclear weapons based here would make the UK once again a forward nuclear base for the US. Approximately 150 American B-61 nuclear gravity bombs are already currently stationed in five countries in Europe: Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Italy and Turkey.

The nuclear sharing arrangement is part of NATO defence policy. In peace time, the nuclear weapons stored in non-nuclear countries are guarded by US forces, with a dual code system activated in a time of war. Both host country and the US would then need to approve the use of the weapons, which would be launched on the former's airplanes.

There is strong opposition to these weapons being sited in Europe, including from some of the host nation governments. Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands have all, unsuccessfully, called for the removal of US nuclear weapons from their countries.

Dangerous and destabilising

Should the UK be hosting or preparing to host US nuclear weapons, this would constitute a further undermining of our safety, and prospects for global peace. The US is the only country to locate its nuclear weapons outside its own borders and this major increase in NATO's capacity to wage nuclear war in Europe is dangerously destabilising. Their return will increase global tensions and put Britain on the front line in a NATO/Russia war.

Resist

The big question is whether the nuclear bombs have already been returned to Britain, or if their delivery is still in preparation. Either way this is a huge challenge for the peace movement and CND will do everything we can to prevent these weapons being sited here. Millions mobilised across Europe against the imposition of cruise and Pershing missiles in the 1980s. We got rid of all those weapons then, and we have to have the energy, the commitment and the confidence to do that again.

The US should scrap plans to base nuclear weapons in the UK, and withdraw all their other nuclear weapons from Europe at the same time. A withdrawal of all US/NATO nuclear weapons from Europe would help reduce tensions at this very dangerous time, and would ultimately help advance international disarmament.

Storage of US nuclear weapons in the UK

EDM (Early Day Motion) 98: tabled on 24 May 2022

Motion text

That this House is deeply concerned that the United Kingdom has been added to the United States' list of nuclear weapons storage site locations in Europe and that, according to information released by the United States' government, these storage sites are being upgraded; is concerned that this signals a change in the nuclear status of RAF Lakenheath, and that, having been removed in 2008, US nuclear weapons may have already been returned to the base or that the base will receive nuclear weapons in the future; condemns the refusal of the Ministry of Defence to comment on this information to members of this House; notes that RAF Lakenheath, whilst owned by the Ministry of Defence, is run by the United States Air Force; further notes that storage of another country's nuclear weapons on UK soil puts UK citizens at greater risk of nuclear attack; and calls on the Government to decline to host US nuclear weapons at RAF Lakenheath and to use all possible diplomatic efforts to de-escalate current nuclear tensions.

“I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier”: Singing Against the War

Ten million soldiers to the war have gone,
Who may never return again.
Ten million mothers' hearts must break,
For the ones who died in vain.
Head bowed down in sorrow in her lonely years,
I heard a mother murmur thro' her tears:

Chorus:

I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier,
I brought him up to be my pride and joy,
Who dares to put a musket on his shoulder,
To shoot some other mother’s darling boy?
Let nations arbitrate their future troubles,
It’s time to lay the sword and gun away,
There’d be no war today,
If mothers all would say,
I didn’t raise my boy to be a soldier.

(Chorus)

What victory can cheer a mother’s heart,
When she looks at her blighted home?
What victory can bring her back,
All she cared to call her own?
Let each mother answer in the year to be,
Remember that my boy belongs to me!

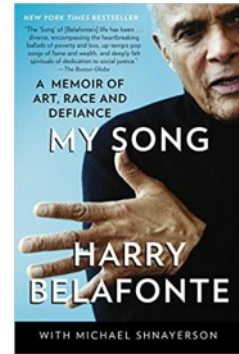
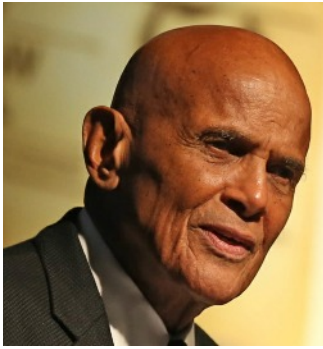
(Chorus)

Source: Al Piantadosi and Alfred Bryan, “I Didn’t Raise My Boy To Be a Soldier.”
Recording: Edison Collection, Library of Congress.

One of the hit songs of 1915, “I Didn’t Raise My Boy to Be a Soldier,” by lyricist Alfred Bryan and composer Al Piantadosi, captured widespread American skepticism about joining in the European war. Meanwhile, interventionists and militarists like former president Theodore Roosevelt beat the drums for preparedness. Roosevelt’s retort to the popularity of the antiwar song was that it should be accompanied by the tune “I Didn’t Raise My Girl to Be a Mother.” He suggested that the place for women who opposed war was “in China—or by preference in a harem—and not in the United States.”

Obituary Harry Belafonte 1927 - 2023

JOHN GREEN pays tribute to the activism of a man of political fearlessness



HARRY BELAFONTE, who died today, aged 96, is hardly the first person who comes to mind when you think of great individuals who have changed the face of history, even though he did.

Younger generations have probably never heard of him and even older ones are more likely to recall him as a singer of Calypso tunes rather than a political activist.

How historical narratives can distort and erase!

Although politics was always central to his life and work up until the day he died, he never trumpeted his own achievements but preferred to work behind the scenes.

Born in 1927, in New York's Harlem, Harry grew up in dire poverty, brought up by a single mother (his father was away at sea for most of the time). His parents were from Jamaica and he spent childhood years on the island. Growing up in Harlem, he experienced daily bullying and racism on the streets and in the schools. He learned about politics the hard way.

Paul Robeson was his first great formative influence: "He gave me my spine," Belafonte said, just as Martin Luther King "nourished my soul."

He dreamt of becoming an actor but had to pay for his acting lessons at the now famous Dramatic Workshop in New York in the late 1940s under Erwin Piscator. His fellow students included Marlon Brando, with whom he became close friends, Tony Curtis, Walter Matthau, Bea Arthur and Sydney Poitier. Poitier, another Caribbean immigrant, and he became like brothers.

At that time the USA was very much a segregated nation, not dissimilar to South Africa. Blacks could not enter most hotels, restaurants, entertainment venues and toilets. In the South there were daily beatings, imprisonments, and lynchings. Most black people were not registered to vote, and their rights were ignored.

As a singer, he was given his first break by a group of jazz musicians in Harlem who liked his voice. He sang to pay for his acting classes. The first time he appeared in front of an audience, he was backed by the Charlie Parker band, which included Miles Davis, among others. That was that start of his career as a club singer. He launched his recording career as a pop singer on the Roost label in 1949, but quickly developed a keen interest in folk music.

Unlike many other performers, throughout his distinguished performing and recording career, he never gave up his political activism. He would become one of the most influential figures in the Civil Rights movement. Without his influence and support Martin Luther King would probably have remained a little-known small-town preacher. He became a close confidant and supporter of King and the Civil Rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s.

Throughout his career, Belafonte was an advocate for political and humanitarian causes, such as the anti-apartheid movement, USA for Africa and campaigning against the Vietnam war.

President Kennedy may not have been elected and would certainly not have pushed through the much-needed civil rights legislation he did without Belafonte's support. During his life, he gave away millions of his hard-earned dollars to civil rights causes in the USA and generous support in terms of money and time to African independence movements and the battle against apartheid.

In his activism on behalf of civil and labour rights, he was able to call on the support of many Hollywood and music scene greats, like Marlon Brando, Paul Newman, Mahalia Jackson, Lena Horne, Sammy Davis Jr, Frank Sinatra, Odetta, Nina Simone and many others.

He also helped launch the careers of several big names in the music world of the mid-20th century, like Miriam Makeba, Nana Mouskouri and even the young Bob Dylan made his first recording accompanying Belafonte (on harmonica).

He was instrumental in helping to bring African students to the USA, including Barack Obama's father.

Unsurprisingly, he was also a victim of McCarthyism and FBI harassment. His phone was tapped and there were several attempts to have him blacklisted. Although he had many friends who were or had been in the Communist Party, he was never a member, so the damage the slurs could do was limited. Even his manager and psychotherapist at the time turned out to be FBI agents feeding back information on him to their masters.

He has won three Grammy Awards (including a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award), an Emmy and a Tony Award.

Belafonte was a longtime critic of US foreign policy.

At various times he made statements: praising the Abraham Lincoln Brigade which fought in Spain; opposing the US embargo on Cuba; praising Soviet peace initiatives; attacking the US invasion of Grenada; opposing the death sentences on the Rosenbergs and praising Fidel Castro.

Belafonte is additionally known for his visit to Cuba which helped ensure hip-hop's place in Cuban society. In a 2003 interview, Belafonte reflected upon this meeting's influence:

"The boycott, the intimidation of the Cuban people, have been going on for over 40 years. One would imagine that after so long a stale and failed policy would be understood, that it is about time to have another kind of relationship with our neighbour to the south, that it would be time for us to sit down and have honest, open exchange with the Cuban people and their representatives and try to reach a level of civility in which we conduct our affairs with each other... there's much about the Cuban government, the Cuban people and what they have achieved that many of us here are still trying to achieve."

He captured much attention in 2002 for his political stance when he attacked President Bush over the Iraq war. During an interview on October 10, 2002, Belafonte referred to a quote from Malcolm X, saying:

"There is an old saying, in the days of slavery. There were those slaves who lived on the plantation, and there were those slaves who live in the house. You got the privilege of living in the house if you served the master, do exactly the way the master intended to have you serve him. That gave you privilege. Colin Powell is allowed to come into the house of the master, as long as he would serve the master, according to the master's purpose. And when Colin Powell dares to suggest something other than what the master wants to hear, he will be turned back out to pasture. And you don't hear much from those who live in the pasture."

Belafonte used that quote to characterise former US Secretaries of State Colin Powell and Condoleezza Rice. Powell and Rice both responded, with Powell calling the remarks "unfortunate" and Rice saying: "I don't need Harry Belafonte to tell me what it means to be black."

In 2006, he led a delegation of activists to meet Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

Chavez had initiated a programme to provide cheaper heating oil for poor people in parts of the United States. Belafonte supported this initiative. He was quoted as saying, during the meeting with Chavez: “No matter what the greatest tyrant in the world, the greatest terrorist in the world, George W Bush says, we’re here to tell you: Not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of the American people support your revolution.”

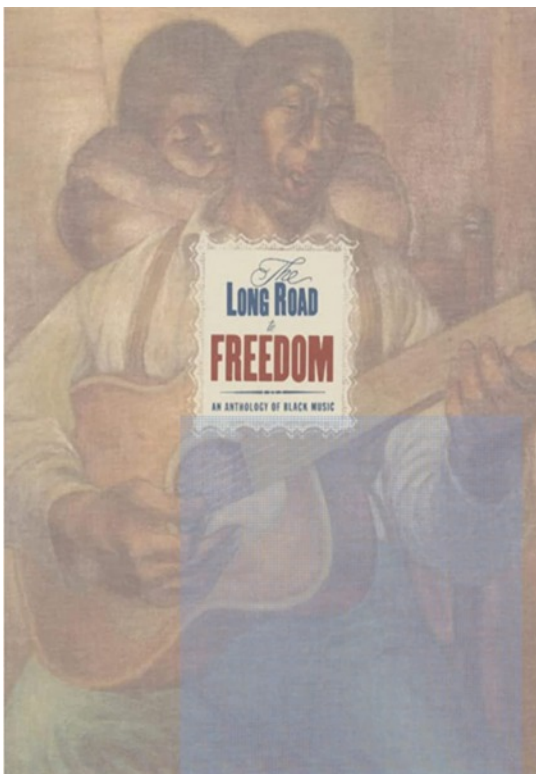
The comment ignited a great deal of controversy. Hillary Clinton refused to acknowledge Belafonte’s presence at an awards ceremony that featured both of them.

During a Martin Luther King Day speech at Duke University in 2006, Belafonte compared the US government to the hijackers of the September 11 attacks, saying: “What is the difference between that terrorist and other terrorists?” In response to criticism of his remarks Belafonte asked: “What do you call Bush when the war he put us in to date has killed almost as many Americans as died on 9/11 and the number of Americans wounded in war is almost triple? ... By most definitions Bush can be considered a terrorist.”

In 2016, Belafonte endorsed Bernie Sanders for the Democratic Primary, saying: “I think he represents opportunity; I think he represents a moral imperative, I think he represents a certain kind of truth that’s not often evidenced in the course of politics.”

Belafonte’s autobiography My Song: A Memoir is highly recommended reading.

The Long Road To Freedom: An Anthology Of Black Music - Curated by Harry Belafonte



The title *The Long Road to Freedom* describes both the journey of the African Americans whose music Harry Belafonte engages in this collection and the path of the project itself. Conceived in the late 1950s, *The Long Road to Freedom* includes representations of African American musical traditions from their roots in West African societies through the work songs sung by prisoners on chain gangs in the wake of the Civil War and on into the 1960s. The recording process for this monumental project—originally five records and an accompanying book—spanned the decade between 1961 and ‘71. If that were not enough, the corporate alliance that initially supported the project had broken up by the time the recordings were completed and, as he tells it, Belafonte chose to shelve the project indefinitely rather than revamp its scope for distribution as a smaller product. Nearly thirty years passed before it was taken up again when an executive at Buddha Records searched the archives catalogue and retrieved a record for a project called “Anthology of Negro Folk Music.”

Media and Reading



This episode

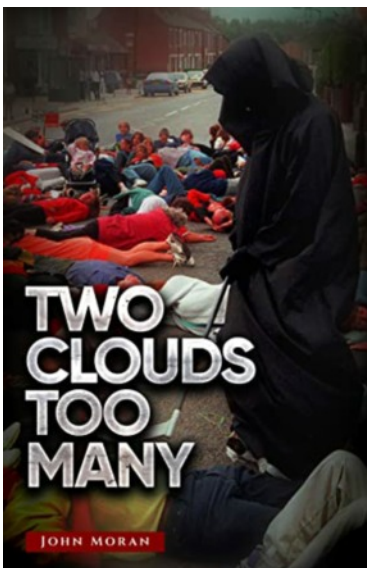
Series 1: Episode 1

Charting the start of the historic wave of strikes, which saw more days lost to strike action since the Thatcher era. Mick Lynch and the RMT are at the forefront of the movement alongside nurses withdrawing their labour for the first time in the union's 106-year history.

Following the escalation of the biggest workers' movement in a generation. Amazon workers in Coventry are to hold the UK's first strike for the global business giant, and Pat Cullen from the Royal College of Nurses comes to the fore as the nurses' dispute with the government faces supreme challenges.



Series 1: Episode 2



If there has ever been a time in your life that you have felt ignored, felt overwhelmed and fearful of what the future holds then you will be on familiar ground with our inspiring story.

Killamarsh, a small ex-mining village living in the shadow of a ticking time bomb that threatens to send us all to Kingdom Come. Faced with corporate mismanagement, the inertia of local officialdom and the disinterest of regulatory bodies, where could we turn?

A story that will take you on a four year journey, to places we never thought we would go, to do things we never thought we would do and to say things we never thought we would say. If you care about your children's and grandchildren's future this will be a journey that resonates as much today as it did when it all began for our village in 1998.