

Britain's enemy is its own ruling class, UN report confirms

John Wight 20 November 2018



Police officers search an area next to a homeless man, Windsor, Britain, October 11, 2018 © Reuters / Darren Staples

As the UK political establishment rips itself to pieces over Brexit, a far greater crisis continues to afflict millions of victims of Tory austerity.

A devastating UN report into poverty in the UK provides incontrovertible evidence that the enemy of the British people is the very ruling class that has gone out of its way these past few years to convince them it is Russia.

Professor Philip Alston, in his capacity as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, spent two weeks touring the United Kingdom. He did so investigating the impact of eight years of one of the most extreme austerity programs among advanced G20 economies in response to the 2008 financial crash and subsequent global recession.

What he found was evidence of a systematic, wilful, concerted and brutal economic war unleashed by the country's right-wing Tory establishment against the poorest and most vulnerable section of British society – upending the lives of millions of people who were not responsible for the aforementioned financial crash and recession but who have been forced to pay the price.



[‘Punitive, mean-spirited & often callous’: UN tears apart legacy of austerity in UK](#)

From the report's introduction:

"It...seems patently unjust and contrary to British values that so many people are living in poverty. This is obvious to anyone who opens their eyes to see the immense growth in foodbanks and the queues waiting outside them, the people sleeping rough in the streets,

the growth of homelessness, the sense of deep despair that leads even the Government to appoint a Minister for Suicide Prevention and civil society to report in depth on unheard of levels of loneliness and isolation."

Though as a citizen of the UK I respectfully beg to differ with the professor's claim that such social and economic carnage seems *"contrary to British values,"*(on the contrary it is entirely in keeping with the values of the country's Tory establishment, an establishment for whom the dehumanization of the poor and working class is central to its ideology), the point he makes about it being *"obvious to anyone who opens their eyes,"* is well made.

For it is now the case that in every town and city centre in Britain, it is impossible to walk in any direction for more than a minute before coming across homeless people begging in the street. And the fact that some 13,000 of them are former soldiers, casualties of the country's various military adventures in recent years, undertaken in service to Washington, exposes the pious platitudes peddled by politicians and the government as reverence for the troops and their 'sacrifice,' as insincere garbage.

Overall, 14 million people in the UK are now living in poverty, a figure which translates into an entire fifth of the population. Four million of them are children, while, according to Professor Alston, 1.5 million people are destitute – that is, unable to afford the basic necessities of life.

And this is what the ruling class of the fifth largest economy in the world, a country that parades itself on the world stage as a pillar of democracy and human rights, considers progress.

The values responsible for creating such a grim social landscape are compatible with the 18th not 21st century. They are proof positive that the network of elite private schools – Eton, Harrow, Fettes College et al. – where those responsible for this human carnage are inculcated with the sense of entitlement and born to rule ethos that defines them, are Britain's hotbeds of extremism.



of British society."

['Millions still in poverty': UN send poverty rapporteur to UK over austerity](#)

Professor Alston: *"British compassion for those who are suffering has been replaced by a punitive, mean-spirited, and often callous approach apparently designed to instill discipline where it is least useful, to impose a rigid order on the lives of those least capable of coping with today's world, and elevating the goal of enforcing blind compliance over a genuine concern to improve the well-being of those at the lowest levels*

Here, set out above in bold relief, is the barbarism that walks hand in hand with free market capitalism. It is the same barbarism that was responsible for pushing post-Soviet Russia into a decade-long economic and social abyss in the 1990s, and the values that have pushed 14 million people in the UK into the same economic and social abyss in our time.

Austerity, it bears emphasizing, is not and never has been a viable economic response to recession in a given economy.

Instead, it is an ideological club, wielded on behalf of the rich and big business to ensure that the price paid for said economic recession is borne exclusively by those least able to bear it – namely, the poor and working people. It is class war by any other name, packaged and presented as legitimate government policy.

However, in Britain's case in 2018, this is a war like no other because, as Professor Philip Alston's report lays bare, only one side in this war has been throwing all the punches and only one side has been taking them.

With Christmas season upon us, the scale of human suffering across the UK ensures that the elaborate ad campaigns inviting us to shop and indulge to our heart's content – ads depicting the middle class dream of affluence and material comfort – take on the character of a provocation. In fact, they call to mind the truism that wars take place when the government tells you who the enemy is, while revolutions take place when you work it out for yourself.

In austerity Britain, who the enemy is has never been more clear.

Britain's enemy is its own ruling class



Writer John Wight has written for a variety of newspapers and websites, including the Independent, Morning Star, Huffington Post, Counterpunch, London Progressive Journal, and Foreign Policy Journal.

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