

# WORKERS' fight



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

## To have a collective voice WE NEED A FIGHTING WORKERS' PARTY

A month after May's election debacle, everyone in Westminster is speculating over whether she will resign or be sacked. May herself, is busy trying to defuse Tory overbidding, and is even looking for suggestions from other parties, or so she claims.

As to Corbyn, he keeps demanding a new general election. What for? To gain a majority for the same unreconstructed Blairites who keep throwing banana skins under his feet?

Either way, none of the main parties even begins to address the problems workers face. As if a different prime minister, or even a completely new set of MPs, could make any difference!

What would they do about homelessness, rising inflation, low wages, casual non-jobs, the collapsing NHS or the damage caused by cuts? And what about the cost of Brexit? Even if it doesn't happen at all, workers will carry on paying the cost of the current capitalist crisis. But if Brexit does happen, another big bill will be presented to the working class. Because no way will the bosses' politicians ask them to pay the political mess they've made.

### ***Their profit system is the problem***

Of course, the problems the working class faces are not just caused by "bad policies". They are caused by a system designed for the benefit of capitalists who own everything, at the expense of a working class which owns nothing.

And the politicians we're meant to vote into office every 5 years (while having no control over them), see their role as "managing" this "profit system", as it is. They might promise to tweak it here or there, but even if they deliver on their pledges - a big "if" - they never intend to change it.

This is why their parties are useless



*Maybe not for these old Tory-like policies, though*

Corporation tax in the UK is the lowest of any major developed economy. Our new settlement with business will ask large corporations to pay a little more while still keeping UK corporation tax among the lowest of the major developed economies. In

to us. As long as this system remains in place, the working class will continue to be robbed of its labour - and even its most basic needs will be ignored, as the Grenfell Tower disaster shows.

Think of how quickly these politicians "forget" their pledges, especially those concerning workers which could cut into capitalist profits. And think of their double-talk - like Corbyn's "For the many not for the few" written in big letters on the cover of his manifesto while inside, it promises the bosses that under Labour, corporation tax would remain among the lowest in the world! "For the many"? No, it wasn't. It was a pledge to benefit "the few"!

### ***The party the working class needs***

Today the working class faces the likelihood of another all-out offensive, because of Brexit. At such a time, the last thing it needs is more "forgotten" pledges and double-speak.

What it needs is its own independent party - which relies on workers' consciousness and a clear understanding

of what's in store, unlike today's political parties which rely on sowing confusion, lies, and illusions.

The working class needs a party which dares to say clearly that there is no "soft" Brexit. That Brexit, in whatever form, is being used to deceive workers into believing that British laws and bosses are a lesser evil, and even that foreign workers are enemies.

A true working class party (unlike Corbyn's Labour) would state clearly that ending the free movement of workers is an attack against the whole working class, undermining its capacity to fight by dividing its ranks.

What is needed is a party which is determined to build up workers' collective strength and self-confidence, by helping them to fight back, whenever necessary. This party's ultimate aim would have to be the overthrow of this decrepit capitalist system, replacing it with a society organised to provide for the needs of all: so it can only be a revolutionary workers' party - and it needs to be built urgently! ☐

**NHS**

Internal documents published by the Guardian newspaper reveal that Charing Cross Hospital is to lose its 24/7 A&E, emergency surgery, intensive care and a range of complex emergency and non-emergency medical and surgical services along with 300 beds. This will reduce the hospital itself, physically, by 87% of its size. And guess what? All for the sake of realising as much of its real estate value as possible in one of the wealthiest parts of West London.

In fact, someone called "Sir" Robert Naylor, a former chief executive of University College Hospital, was asked by the government to review NHS real estate and he's identified 5 hospitals that could fetch more than £1bn if sold off. The proceeds thus acquired would ostensibly raise £10bn for the renovation of crumbling NHS infrastructure. To this

**• Killer treatment**

Far from getting the Leavers' famous £350m/wk, the NHS is facing a new round of cuts, according to a leaked document. Hospitals in 14 areas of England are being asked to "think the unthinkable" so as to cut their £183.1m "deficit" - a deficit created by years of cuts and underfunding in the first place.

Some of these "unthinkable" recommendations, are: increasing the waiting

**• NHS drain**

In June, there were 40,000 vacant nurses' posts in the NHS and 3,500 vacant midwives' posts. And these shortages can only get worse.

One reason is the fall in the number of EU workers in the NHS. Many are leaving because they're worried about their future after Brexit. Meanwhile the past regular flow of EU nurses coming to Britain has almost completely

**Demolishing healthcare to line the fat cats' pockets**



end the NHS is to set up six public-private partnerships to oversee the sales - with the proceeds being divided between the NHS and private firms! In other words, the radical

amputation of Charing Cross hospital - and others - may well have more to do with renovating the fortunes of new and old private "partners" than with renovating hospitals! □

period for planned operations beyond 18 weeks, stricter limitations for treating patients with back pain and other musculo-skeletal conditions, a £2m cut to the Continuing Healthcare scheme which provides financial support for patients with serious, long-term medical problems - including people with brain damage - and denying patients specific surgical treatments which are seen

as less likely to succeed. Some hospital units in these 14 areas, which include the London boroughs of Camden, Islington, Haringey, Barnet and Enfield, will be downgraded or shut altogether, and there will be job cuts, when they are already struggling with staff shortages. A system which makes the sick pay to keep the rich healthy!

stopped - with a 96% drop over the past year!

But EU workers only make up 5% of the NHS nursing register. The biggest shortfall is actually caused by British nurses leaving the NHS in droves, due to appalling working conditions. What's more, due to the Tories' decision to end nursing bursaries, new recruits are no longer making up for those who leave.

So what next? NHS nurses showed in a poll that they're ready to fight to get rid of their pay cap. And so they should. But surely, pay, jobs and working conditions are issues which go hand in hand with pay - and are all well worth fighting about, against politicians who choose to line the pockets of the rich rather than staff the NHS!

**Housing**

More than a million households living in private rented accommodation are at risk of becoming homeless by 2020 says the latest Shelter report. The reasons are well-known: rising rents, benefit refusals, cuts and freezes and most importantly, the lack of social housing.

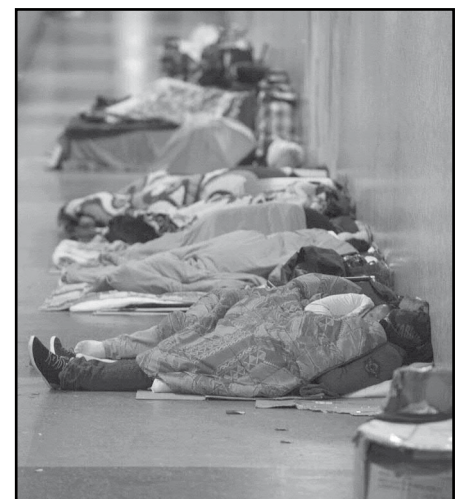
Such a situation is the result of the housing policy of successive governments, Labour and Tory, for four decades now. Even after the Grenfell Tower fire which generated so much politicking, not one politician has raised the issue of how to resolve the housing crisis.

The issue is urgent: social housing

**Social housing crisis**

is in very poor condition, a growing number of people are being pushed into bed and breakfasts, or even onto the streets: homelessness has increased by 34% since 2010! Others still, are being pushed from one tenancy to another, on rents and up-front costs that they cannot afford. Until finally they are evicted or sent away to far-flung towns where accommodation is cheaper.

Let's not expect a solution from any government. They can only be relied upon to be loyal to the rich landlords and financiers. It is under their very noses that empty houses are speculated upon, rather than lived in. □





## Obvious, damning causes

It's now crystal clear what caused the Grenfell inferno. And who's to blame. The perpetrators of what, yes, was murder, are a long line of people starting with those in governments and councils since the 1980s and ending with the subcontracted petty capitalists and directors who squeeze profits out of managing housing for the councils.

Housing and fire regulations were thrown into successive governments' "bonfires of red tape" starting with Thatcher's in the 1980s. And this bonfire is still being stoked by businessmen aided by ministers and MPs who claim that too much red tape, especially on Health and Safety hampers their profits. Never mind that it saves lives.

Ignoring H&S after the inquiry into Camberwell's Lakanal House in 2009, where cladding exactly like Grenfell's caught alight and 6 people were killed,

### • After the disaster

More horrific details keep emerging of the totally inadequate response of all authorities, before, during and after, the blaze. Now fire crews have spoken out. They were ill-equipped and without even a 30m ladder to reach the 10th floor - let alone the means to reach the 24th. Water pressure was so low that "it wasn't

### • May's disastrous response

May deserved all the anger directed at her after her useless response. Booned at her belated visit, she then met survivors at Downing street and promised they'd all be re-housed within 3 weeks. But 3 weeks later, most are still homeless. At the time of writing, just 14 families have been re-housed and 139 out of 158 have had an "offer". There are 68 units supposed to be made available in an unfinished housing development nearby - in its "affordable part", with a separate "poor door" next to the bins! Some survivors are still sleeping rough, in cars and in hotel rooms (until they're thrown out because of bookings, which take priority!).

As for acting to replace fire-accelerating cladding on several hundred high-rise buildings around the country, May has passed the buck to local councils. In fact government experts failed 100% of the panels tested. So now Councils are meant to take full responsibility and make their tower blocks fire-proof, out of their own budgets. May says no extra government money is available, despite having called this a "major national disaster". So why isn't it treated as such? Because, as survivors rightly observe, they're just faceless, working class people, undeserving of her government's high-and-mighty attention? Well, they're not going anywhere until they get what they need!



led directly to this fire. Not only was such cladding meant to be banned, but sprinkler systems were recommended for tower-blocks. But nothing was done, even after the Grenfell Residents' Action Committee warned repeatedly of "a fire waiting to happen". After all,

up to firefighting". They had repeatedly to phone Thames Water.

Of the 300 people thought to have been inside during the fire, firefighters managed to rescue 65, while maybe 130 got out on their own. The dead so far could be as many as 89.

### • Council failure

Councils are right to tackle the lack of fire safety in their buildings "asap". But the chaos which ensued at Camden's Chalcots estate when residents were told on a Friday evening that they had to evacuate that very night, is another example of how little consideration officials have for ordinary people. How come, if Camden knew evacuation was a possibility, did it not prepare decent temporary housing in advance, for all these people - including disabled, elderly and sick, whose special needs were not even catered for? It's contemptuous and it's inexcusable that they did not.

As for Kensington and Chelsea council, a new leader has only just been rushed in, who talks about it "taking a generation" to "heal the wounds" with the community. It probably will, given that the council isn't even starting to address these wounds. Instead of sending in commissioners to take over the whole council, May's Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has asked a team of (private?) "experts" to help manage social housing, regeneration and "community engagement" services. Why should anyone trust them? Didn't just such "experts" say everything was fine at Grenfell, before the fire?

## Grenfell Tower

why should the Kensington rich in the country's wealthiest borough, listen to poor working people living in a tower block they'd rather not have had there in the first place? The residents were dismissed as unworthy of any attention. Now over 80 of them are dead. □

Were the 200 firefighters and 40 engines, sent from all over London, enough? When firefighters' jobs have been cut by 20% since 2010, and when equipment and even water was inadequate, the answer is obvious. And yes, it is due to "austerity" - years of it.

### • Which "public"?

Then there's the Public Inquiry. Except that it's hardly "public". The government will decide the frame of reference and May has "hand-picked" 70-year-old retired court of appeal judge, "Sir" Martin Moore-Bick to preside. In other words the criminals are hiring their own prosecutor.

Moore-Bick's record doesn't inspire confidence, but that's no surprise. He recently ruled that Westminster Council was within its rights to "socially cleanse" an ailing black single mum of 5, with diabetes and HIV, 50 miles away to Milton Keynes. This was thankfully overturned by the supreme court.

Understandably, the un-rehoused Grenfell Tower survivors for whom homes in Birmingham were suggested at one point, don't think this man is a suitable head for the inquiry. They heckled him when he came to meet them. In the meantime, an independent inquiry is being called for, to find out the truth. The trouble is that there are so many guilty parties - among them Labour and Tory politicians at every level of government and going back decades - that it's hard to see how the facts will be allowed to come out.

**May after June****May, weak and unstable, but still arrogant**

May got her comeuppance on June 8th. Thanks to the combination of her presidential arrogance, ostentatious contempt for the real problems faced by the majority of the population - including by many Tory voting pensioners - and nationalistic posturing over Brexit, she managed to get a lot of people to vote against her, one way or another.

On the strength of the Tories' 20-point lead in opinion polls, she had hoped for a landslide which would have killed two birds with one stone - giving her the mandate for her "Brexit means Brexit" that she never really had, while helping her

to hush the discordant overbidding of her party's rival factions. Except that May lost her gamble and with it her majority in the Commons, prompting even more posturing and overbidding from her party's hard-Brexiteers.

In the aftermath of her "snap election", May has appeared just weaker and more unstable, but as arrogant as ever. And now, after one month in which she's been desperately trying to paper over the damage she caused to her own side, she's just looking pathetic - like a politician who no longer has any future. □

**• The nasty and then.. the ugly**

The only ally May could find to give her a majority in the Commons was the arch-reactionary Democratic Unionist Party.

Of course, the DUP now claims to be the respectable face of unionism in Northern Ireland. But it is best known for its bigoted stance against the extension of women's abortion rights to NI and its "red line" against gay marriage. In fact, the DUP remains closely associated with a Christian fundamentalist sect - the "Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster" - whose

guru, Ian Paisley, was also the founder of the DUP, back in 1971. And this is not to mention its long-standing links with some of the province's far-right loyalist paramilitary thugs, who have a notorious predilection for terrorist methods!

No wonder, May's so-called "confidence and supply" arrangement with the unpalatable DUP has caused a bit of a storm, including in the ranks of her own party. But then, May only has the allies she deserves, doesn't she?

**• Thieves paying crooks**

May wasn't so much criticised for choosing such a bigoted partner as the DUP, than for having "bribed" it with an extra £1bn funding for Northern Ireland over the coming 2 years.

A host of politicians, including Corbyn, blamed her for giving extra money to Northern Ireland rather than to the NHS! As if both didn't need funding urgently! Isn't Northern Ireland the poorest among the country's devolved regions, with the highest homelessness rate and the second lowest number of hospital beds per inhabitant? In fact, £500m/yr extra funding for Northern Ireland would just be a drop in an ocean of want!

Of course that is assuming this money actually goes to the population. And this is where the real problem lies. But no-one dared to mention it. For months the Northern Irish devolved institutions have been suspended because of an investigation into a scam run by DUP ministers who were lining business pockets with funding earmarked for the environment. So how will the DUP be prevented from squandering this £1bn too? Isn't that the real question?

**• Abortion still illegal in Northern Ireland!**

After decades of struggle, women in Northern Ireland will finally be able to have an abortion on the NHS, but only provided they can travel to mainland Britain and arrange it there.

Despite Northern Ireland always being emphatically described by every government as a possession of the British state, the British legislation on abortion has never applied there. Instead, women could be prosecuted for having an abortion, unless giving birth might kill them or render them a "physical or mental wreck". So those women who could afford it had to travel to the mainland and pay £900 or more, for the procedure.

After several court rulings describing this situation as an abuse of human rights, May has finally agreed to support the introduction of this new right. But make no mistake: this has nothing to do with her support for women's rights, but everything to do with getting her own party to swallow the bitter pill of her alliance with the anti-abortion DUP, while still depriving women in the DUP's fiefdom of the rights they are entitled to!

**• Tory hounds sniffing May's blood**

No sooner was the June election result out, than some Tories began calling for May to face a leadership challenge. So, in order to keep them quiet, she used the same trick she had used after the referendum: she co-opted some of her most vocal critics into her government.

Michael Gove, a prominent hard-Brexiter, was parachuted in as Environment secretary - causing outrage among environmental NGOs, given his climate change scepticism. Likewise, Steve



The Sunday Times post election coverage: "Get Blunder woman!"

Baker, leading light of the hard-Brexit "European Research Group" of Tory backbenchers, became Under Secretary of State for Exiting the EU - despite having vowed to "destroy the EU", which is hardly a good idea for someone who's meant to get a "good deal" from its leaders!

Yet this didn't stop the same ERG from demanding that May should prove her commitment to a hard Brexit! Meaning that the more concessions May makes, the more the hard-Brexit snipers will put pressure on her! Not great for "stability"!

**• Gove's fishy proclamations**

Soon after his appointment to government, Gove decided to have a go at steering the Brexit boat: he announced that Britain was withdrawing from the London Convention on Fisheries, to "take back control of our water".

Never mind that fisheries is not even part of Gove's brief! Never mind either, that this Convention, dating back to 1964, has long been overridden by EU fisheries policies and ceased to be relevant to anything.

But what does Gove care, even if his announcement makes things awkward for May? What matters to him and his hard-Brexit fan club, is the sound of his own voice and its echoes in the media, not the credibility of what he says. For all we know, Gove's proclamation may just be aimed at positioning himself for a leadership challenge against May.



**The Labour Vote: For Corbyn, or against May? Corbyn's Labour**

Where did the Labour party's electoral surge come from? Certainly, many of those who voted Labour were angry about the housing crisis, cuts, etc. - and they blamed the government. So their "anti-Tory" vote went to Labour, as the only credible alternative. Of course, Corbyn did denounce the cuts and "austerity", but his manifesto targetted specific sections of the electorate with eye-catching promises, for instance the pledge to abolish tuition fees, to draw the youth and middle-class vote. So while some workers may have been in favour of the promised renationalisations, many thought: nice idea, but he'll never do it.

Labour also captured a part of the discontented Tory vote, most astonishingly in wealthy Kensington. This is in part about May's "hard Brexit" stance, but also because of



her planned cuts affecting the elderly. Not to mention her arrogant presidential style. In other words, the Labour surge was largely a vote against May. It's therefore unlikely to repeat itself - at least not in the same way.

Nevertheless, Corbyn has successfully reinstated the so-called

"two-party system", allowing power to alternate between two parties, both willing to do the bidding of capital, while giving the appearance of being different. Of course, there was no candidate in this election who said what had to be said: if the working class wants to reverse the cuts and austerity, it must fight! ☐

**• Corbyn, paving the way for a new Blair?**

After losing three general elections in a row, the Labour Party did much better than expected in this one. It won 30 more seats than in 2015 - getting 262 in total. Its share of the vote increased by 9.6% - more than in any election since 1945. Membership has more than trebled - from 200,000 to 650,000. So, after the loss of credibility caused by Blair, Corbyn has been

successful at revamping the party's image - and against all expectations!

That said, the parliamentary party remains dominated by Blairites, who, prior to this election never hesitated to join in the Tory and media chorus of anti-Corbyn ridicule. Since Labour's surge in the election they have quietened down, and a few more have even joined Tom Watson and other

Blairites in Corbyn's shadow cabinet. But they can't wait to crawl out of the woodwork and reassert themselves. Owen Smith isn't the only Labour MP who thinks, after the election event, that Corbyn may not be so bad, after all - but that if *he* had been the party's leader instead, Labour could have won..!

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**• Tail-ending May's Brexit?**

Having imposed a 3-line whip on his MPs, forcing them to support May's triggering of Brexit before the snap election, afterwards, Corbyn went even further. He actually sacked three of his only-just-appointed shadow cabinet who voted for an anti-Brexit amendment to the Queen's Speech, along with another 46 Labour MPs, against his whip.

The amendment called for the government not to leave the EU without a deal, to guarantee a parliamentary vote on the final outcome of negotiations, to

set in place transitional arrangements, and to "set out proposals to remain within the customs union and single market". It also demanded clear protections for EU nationals already living in Britain. The irony is that Corbyn's reason for refusing this amendment was that Labour doesn't support full membership of the single market. In other words, in front of his own MPs who are arguing for a softer Brexit, Corbyn is insisting on May's "Brexit means Brexit"!

**• And what about the free movement of people?**

After being strongly pro-migrant when the news was covering the worst atrocities of the refugee crisis a few months ago, Corbyn has done a U-turn on the free movement of people - one of the conditions for membership of the single market. The party's election manifesto reads: "Freedom of movement will end when we leave the European Union". And later on that "Labour will develop and implement fair immigration rules ... We will replace income thresholds with a

prohibition on recourse to public funds". What could "fair immigration rules" mean? And does the second sentence mean migrants would not have access to the NHS and benefits in certain circumstances?

Whatever Corbyn's and Labour's dangerous posturing over Brexit, it remains the case that all workers, irrespective of nationality, have the same interests and only one enemy - the bosses of all nationalities!

**Brexit watch****From "Take Back Control" to "Out of Control"**

It is only weeks into Brexit negotiations and all the problems are finally on embarrassing public display. British officials have now accepted there will have to be a trade-off between access to the single market and freedom of movement during the Brexit negotiations. And civil servants have told ministers they can't have their cake and eat it.

Since the June election, the

interests of big business are being voiced more loudly. Hammond gave a speech in Berlin warning against allowing "*petty politics to interfere with economic logic*" and publicly ridiculed the "cake-eating" approach of Boris Johnson. David Davis, the Brexit secretary, has moved from a hard-Brexit position to talking about the interests of the City and the "aviation sector" as priorities. Even the arch-Brexitite,

Cummings (former campaign director of Vote-Leave) is having his doubts!

But of course, it was only a matter of time that these tensions exploded in public. The politicians were not foolish enough to be unaware that a tiny island like Britain had no leg to stand on in Brexit negotiations, but they peddled their lies as long as they could! As for the chaotic future this will produce, what do they care? ☐

### • Another set of 2nd-class citizens being created

Theresa May called her post-Brexit rights offer for EU citizens "*fair and generous*" and of course she would. But it's neither. To start with, those with 5 years residence will have to apply for "settled status" and to register for a "residence document". They'll have to produce this for work purposes or NHS access. In effect, they'll be treated just like non-EU immigrants - except that they'll need to have an ID card.

Moreover, there are many ambiguities in the offer. For instance, the proposals don't specify income thresholds for retirees, for the self-employed and those who are posted around the world for work. And then there are direct attacks. Under the British offer, EU citizens can bring in family members only up to a cut-off date. Even though the EU is offering to allow British EU immigrants to bring in family members in perpetuity.

So we see that May is already

### • Brits turning German, French...

A record number of British people are applying for citizenship in countries like Germany and France as a direct consequence of the Brexit referendum. In the last year, the number of British taking German citizenship rose by 361% and those taking French citizenship rose by 254%.

### • Brexit in Ireland?

So, what happens to Ireland in all this Brexit chaos? The Irish foreign minister unwittingly showed the ridiculousness

proposing an erosion of EU citizens' rights. And this is just the beginning. British governments have a long record

of turning human beings into 'foreigners', 'immigrants', 'aliens' and even 'subjects'...

At present the figures only include a few thousand out of hundreds of thousands of British who reside in these countries. However, they show that these British don't think "their" government is capable of taking care of their citizenship rights. And they prefer to stay in the EU and enjoy the benefits

that come from being citizens of a much larger entity, the EU, rather than tiny Britain. Understandably so. And given the chaos that Brexit - and now the June election - have unleashed, probably even more will want to join them!

of the situation, when he said that since the referendum, they have been talking about "*open borders, invisible borders,*

*hard borders, soft borders*"!

The present frontier between Britain and Ireland splits the island of Ireland between the British 6 counties and the Irish 26. But it is an open border and those on both sides want it to stay that way. In other words, for them, the idea of a hard border as a result of Brexit, is out of the question. There are too many links between the two parts of Ireland, especially since "partition" was so artificial and unwelcome (to most!) to begin with. For now, the governments in Ireland and Britain are talking about a "soft" border, which would exist "electronically" in the databases of custom officials. But nobody knows what sort of checks and controls will be proposed. What is obvious, however, is that any restrictions will have the potential to aggravate the effects of the ongoing economic crisis in Ireland, too.





**The "divorce bill" and what's behind it**

**Brexit watch**

The latest estimate by the Financial Times (and they would know!) of the Brexit "divorce bill" is £53bn. But as the same newspaper points out: it is nothing compared to the size of Britain's economy. It is only 2.5% of Britain's annual economic output and could be easily paid through borrowing, adding little to the current high levels of debt.

But, warns the FT, a much larger hit to public finances is coming due to Brexit itself. The Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates it will be between £20bn to £40bn - not as a one-off, but every year - and not just because of the loss of tax receipts from companies which are affected by export tariffs, etc., but because the government will agree to subsidies to keep these companies in Britain, as it already has with Nissan. And it doesn't take a genius to know who is going to be asked to foot this extra and exorbitant bill! □



**• Brexit jitters**

According to the Leave campaign, Brexit was supposed to restore Britain to the glory of world dominance, put it at the "front of the queue" for bilateral trade deals, and guarantee economic growth.

But the dodgy post-referendum economic situation proves that Britain cannot escape the global capitalist crisis. In fact, it has made it worse. In this

on-going crisis, where speculators spend their time trying to anticipate which part of the system is next to go down the drain, any kind of political instability and uncertainty can generate a fresh wave of speculation. First the referendum and then, May's humiliation in the June election, have thus generated even greater financial volatility. So much so, that a

simple statement by Mark Carney, the head of the Bank of England, is enough to cut the exchange rate of the pound by several percent in a matter of minutes!

While the Brexiteers promised jobs, a better-funded NHS and more "democratic control", that won't happen by getting out of the EU - but only by starting to get rid of capitalism!

**• Falling standards of living**

Inflation is eating into wages. The Brexit referendum saw the pound drop in what business papers called a "flash crash", to its lowest level in 31 years. It has fallen 15% against the dollar, and economists forecast that it will fall further by the end of 2017. But this

increases prices on imported goods, from supermarket wares to imported car components.

While some speculators on the falling pound are doing well, and manufacturers like Nissan and Ford line up to be compensated by the government,

the working class has had no compensation for the rising costs of living. Of course, it cannot expect any assistance from the government, in the way that the bosses can. But a collective fight-back could just be the way to achieve this!

**• Banking-exit**

Hard-headed bankers who know where the money is, do not believe the politicians' lies about Britain's grand post-Brexit future. In fact, they are already preparing to leave and set up base in the EU. Thirteen major banks, including Goldman Sachs, UBS, and Citigroup, have indicated that they will move operations from Britain to Frankfurt, Luxembourg, Paris or Dublin, in order to retain their access to the single market.

cuts out of its London-based workforce of 9,000. JP Morgan, which employs 16,000 people in Britain, has also declared that it is beginning to move operations, starting

with up to 1,000 job cuts. HSBC is "moving" another 1,000 jobs to Paris. The wonders of Britain "going it alone" are beginning to diminish..

But this will mean thousands of job cuts in the banking and insurance sector, with accounting firm Ernst and Young estimating 232,000 finance-related job losses. Deutsche bank has already announced contingency plans of 4,000 job



**Our History*****70 Years ago, the Partition of India******The bloody price imposed by Britain for independence***

Seventy years ago, on 15 August 1947, former "British" India gained independence. But fearing that a sense of victory would allow India's future regime to resist Britain's continuing economic domination, while boosting the then growing rebellion of other colonised people against their colonisers, the British government ensured that independence came at an exorbitant price for the Indian masses. It played a cynical game of divide and rule which led in the end to the partitioning of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, thereby causing one of the largest, bloodiest refugee migrations in modern history and a toxic legacy of warfare and religious bigotry.

***The proletarian masses against colonial domination***

The very basis for this artificial division was laid by colonial policy. The British created an electoral system based on religion and cultivated the loyalist Muslim League against the larger nationalist party, the Indian National Congress. This INC, although it espoused an all-Indian nationalism, also had ties to Hindu nationalist groups.

The end of WWII saw a mobilisation of the Asian poor masses against the colonial powers. In China, the peasantry rose against the landlords and threatened to set the towns alight. After the collapse of the Japanese occupation in Malaysia, Indonesia and Indochina, the proletariat rose against the return of the old colonial powers. In India, a mutiny of 20,000 sailors of the Royal Indian Navy, in February 1946, sparked off a wave of strikes involving hundreds of thousands.

Bankrupted by the war, the British state could not afford to maintain its presence in India. But, since it had to leave, it was determined to do it on its own terms, so as to retain its political influence and preserve the economic interests of British companies. To this end, the mobilisation of the masses had first to be crushed. For this, the British authorities used the services of the Indian Congress and Muslim League, both of which represented the propertied classes. Both had proved their willingness and ability to keep a lid on the poor masses in their past positions in local governments, and neither could afford to come to power on the back of their mobilisation.

Nehru, soon to become India's first Prime Minister, later described



the Congress position in these days as "*sitting on the edge of a volcano*" - a proletarian volcano that could blow away both the colonial power and the weak Indian capitalist class at once. Had the proletarian masses had a party of their own, they could have bid for power in the name of the working class and poor peasants. However, there was no such party. Despite the willingness of the working class to fight at the barricades in the face of British bullets, this opportunity to assert its own interests was squandered.

***Class unity drowned in communal violence***

By May 1946, the mobilisation was receding. But the masses could rise again. The British hurriedly set about making arrangements to leave this explosive situation to the Indian elite. They proposed a power-sharing plan by which the Congress, the League and the princely states would counterbalance each other's influence in a Federation entrenching the religious divide ("Hindustan" and "Pakistan"). The Congress, however, opposed this scheme. In their struggle for power, both parties began to fan the flames of religious violence. In August 1946, communal riots were orchestrated, with the worst killings in Calcutta. Thus, the class unity of January-May was drowned in the blood of religious fratricide. Once again, the proletarian masses paid dearly for the absence of a party standing on a class policy, in the name of the defence of the whole proletariat, against its exploiters - colonial and indigenous.

***A bloody legacy***

Failing to get a power-sharing agreement from Congress, the League demanded a religion-based Pakistan. This suited the British, both because a divided subcontinent would be easier to control and because this would prevent the emergence of a giant independent state in Asia.

In July 1947, the British government decided to withdraw, having hastily drawn up an artificial border between India and an unviable Pakistan formed by two territories over a thousand miles apart. Riots broke out, sparked off by communal gangs from both sides. There were horrific killings, looting, arson and rape. People on the "wrong" side of the border were forced to flee. Leaving everything behind, 10 to 12 million people crossed on foot this British-made border, in long columns. At least a million were killed. An estimated 75,000 women were abducted and raped.

Britain handed over power to the Indian and Pakistani wealthy and their communal gangs; it defused the proletarian powderkeg and gave an ominous warning that independence came at a bloody price. It kept both new states under its influence, with its own civil servants and military top-brass at the head of both state machineries until 1950. The bloody legacy of Partition was to be borne by both populations for decades, through wars, which are still going on in Kashmir, the 1971 breakup of Pakistan and the on-going use of religious demagoguery and riots by nationalist parties in both countries. □



**100 years ago, July-August 1917**

**Our History**

**A turning point in the Russian revolution**



**Government troops open fire on protestors in July**

Having overthrown the Czarist regime in February 1917, the Russian revolution carried on developing. The Soviets, formed by elected deputies from working class districts, factories and army units, exercised the reality of state power. To deprive the working class of this power, the propertied classes, led by the capitalist Cadets party, formed a coalition government, with most of the anti-Czarist forces. They tried to restore the authority of the old state machinery, while striving to continue the imperialist war against which the anger of the working class had erupted in February.

Alone among the anti-Czarist forces, Lenin's Bolsheviks argued that the Soviets should aim at taking political power to preserve the gains of the revolution. But the Bolsheviks were in a minority, even within the ranks of the Soviets which were still dominated by the pro-government Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevik parties.

This situation of dual state power, involving two classes with directly opposed social interests, could not last forever. But there was no possible short cut. The working class had to learn, through its own experience who were its allies and its enemies - and what it could really achieve using its collective strength. This was bound to take time. For the Bolsheviks, facilitating this learning process became the main task of the moment.

In June 1917, the coalition government relaunched an offensive on the war front. As Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the revolution, wrote later:

*"The military events were developing amid ever increasing difficulties(..). With regard to the land question, industrial life, and national relations, the coalition government did not take a single resolute step forward. The food and transportation situations were getting more and*

*more chaotic. Local clashes were more frequent. The "Socialistic" ministers were exhorting the masses to be patient (..)*

*"From various points at the front came delegates and private individuals, telling of the chaos which reigned in the army as a result of the advance. The so-called government press demanded severe repressions. (..) The allied ambassadors were pressing the government with the demand that army discipline be restored and the advance continued. The greatest panic prevailed in government circles, while among the workers much discontent had accumulated, which craved for outward expression (..)*

*"After all the preceding experience of the coalition, there would seem to be but one way out of the difficulty - to break with the Cadets and set up a Soviet government. The relative forces within the*



**Soldiers protest against the war, June**

*Soviets were such at the time that the Soviet's power as a political party would fall naturally into the hands of the Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. We deliberately faced the situation. Thanks to the possibility of re-elections at any time, the mechanism of the Soviets assured a sufficiently exact reflection of the progressive shift toward the left in the masses of workers and soldiers. After the break of the coalition with the bourgeoisie (..) the proletariat's struggle for power would naturally move in the channel of Soviet organizations(..) This is the reason why we demanded that the leading Soviet parties, in which we had no real confidence (and we frankly said so), should take the governing power into their own hands.(..)*

*"A clash was inevitable. The workers and soldiers pressed from below, vehemently voiced their discontent with the official Soviet policies and demanded greater resolution from our party. We considered that, in view of the backwardness of the provinces, the time for such a course had not yet arrived. (..) On the one hand, there was the danger that Petrograd might break away from the more backward parts of the country; while on the other, there was the feeling that only the active and energetic intervention of Petrograd could save the day."*

In early July, armed workers spontaneously took to the streets to vent their frustration. The government got such a fright that it directed all its forces against the Bolsheviks. This was to open the eyes of large numbers of workers and, eventually, to backfire against the coalition government:

*"The workers' organizations and establishments of our party were being ruthlessly crushed... Arrests, searches, assaults and even murders came to be common occurrences(..) Our organs were suppressed. Revolutionary Petrograd felt that the provinces and the army were still far from being with it. In working-class districts of the city tyranny set in, while in the garrison repressive measures were introduced.. and some units were disarmed(..) [However, the attacks] on working-class districts were short-lived. They were followed by accessions of revolutionary spirit, not only among the proletariat, but also in the Petrograd garrison.(..) The wave of Bolshevism began to spread from the urban centres to every part of the country and, despite all obstacles, penetrated into the army ranks. The new coalition government (..) had already openly embarked upon a policy of repression. The ministry had restored the death penalty in the army. Our papers were suppressed and our agitators were arrested; but this only increased our influence."*

Some Bolsheviks leaders, like Trotsky, were jailed and others, like Lenin, went into hiding. Soon, in August, a failed attempt at a military coup aimed at disarming the Soviets, with Kerensky's support, completed the job started by the July repression. By then, the working class had learnt that no matter how radical they tried to sound, the men in the coalition government were its enemies - and that the only way for the working class and poor peasants to secure their gains, would be for the Soviets to take power. The way to the October Revolution was now open. □

**King's Cross railway station (London)****Gravy train**

Stagecoach, Britain's second largest transport group, is trying to pay less than the £412m/yr it owes the government for the East Coast franchise (of which it owns 90%). They claim they "overbid" for the franchise, when they acquired it in 2015. In effect, this company is asking for a government bail-out.

But Stagecoach is only the latest in a series of profiteering rail companies which make hay while the sun shines, only to leave the taxpayer

to pick up the tab when the economic clouds get thicker. After privatisation, in 1996, the East Coast franchise was first operated by Sea Containers, which went bust in 2006, just a year after its franchise was renewed, claiming that... it had "overbid". It was taken over by National Express, which walked away in the middle of the 2007 financial crisis. Neither was made to pay back what they owed. And now Stagecoach, having made its profits - and paid its



CEO £1.3m in 2016-17 - blames the economic situation created by Brexit and the drop in consumer confidence (but not its exorbitant fares!) in order to demand a bailout. □

- **Potentially lethal rattle-traps**

This is really worrying. East Coast trains start shaking, shuddering and rattling at points between Hitchin and Stevenage (and other places further up the line)! Is this because of cuts in track maintenance? Not replacing sleepers? We don't know, but we ought to. Moreover, something must be done! Have the bosses forgotten the 2000 Hatfield derailment (4 killed, 70 injured) due to cracks in the rail due to metal fatigue? We haven't! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 21/6/17]

- **Where's ours?**

So Stagecoach-Virgin East Coast is crying about its "losses"? Well what about

our losses? The cost of living has gone through the roof while our pay has fallen to the floor: a 2% pay "rise" last April, when RPI is now 3.7% and climbing?! So we can take a leaf out of Stagecoach/VTEC's book: they say, "we're in talks with the DfT about changing the terms of our current contract... because the world has moved on since we wrote our bid and agreed our franchise." Quite. The world has moved on for us. Our "subsidy" - or rather what they owe us for our sweated labour - needs one helluva boost! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 5/7/17]

- **The barest minimum**

What's more, the £ has fallen 13% since our last pay rise. So taking 13% of our highest-paid workmates' wages as the only acceptable minimum rise, we

would need: a £560/month increase, just to keep up with inflation. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 5/7/17]

- **Bravo!**

Did GTR think they'd buy out Southern drivers' opposition to DOO? The drivers have shown loud & clear that guards' jobs and their own Ts&Cs aren't for sale! Some drivers said they'd never accept DOO no matter what they were offered! Others said they'd even take less money to preserve guards' jobs and Ts&Cs! PS: Despite media spin and GTRs' lies over this "great" pay offer, the 23.8% was spread over 4 years, which brings it to a modest 5.95% per year. And given that RPI is 3.7% for June '17 (and climbing), it's just 2.25%. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 5/7/17]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**

- **Royal Mail's pension theft**

So RM's meant to have improved its pension offer? By closing the Defined Benefit sections B & C? No, this new proposal is only better than their last terrible one. But it's still terrible. They say that "the most recent financial review" predicts that RM's contributions "could more than double to over £1bn", if our pensions continue to accrue benefits as they do now. But this is nonsense!

Quite simply, the review's figures are based on extrapolations long into the future and are a gross exaggeration - precisely to give RM the excuse to cut our pensions! We should call their bluff! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/7/17]

- **It's a loss-maker for us**

As for RM's proposed "Defined Benefit cash balance scheme", it's a deceitful misnomer: it only defines a minimum cash lump sum. Nothing else! Any increases would be dependent on the ups and downs of the market; our

contributions will increase, while monthly pensions won't be defined either.

No wonder RM's "example illustrations" only compare their new proposal with their old proposal, rather than with our current DB scheme. They don't want us to see how much we still stand to lose! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/7/17]

- **We want a defined benefit scheme for all!**

And for the many of us in the Defined Contribution scheme, RM's "concession" was to increase its contribution by a tiny 1% for each tier, to a grand maximum of 10%! Needless to say, we aren't impressed. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/7/17]

- **Not worth the paper...**

Not only does this pension not meet our expectations, but RM is now threatening us that in case of industrial action "the proposal we are discussing would have to be taken off the table", adding that "times have changed", and banking on the fact that the union won't dare to throw these proposals in the bin!



But no, times haven't changed, RM bosses are trying to get away with murder as usual... And we know where to throw these proposals if the union officials don't...! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/7/17]

- **Compassion in words... never in deeds**

This is outrageous. After the Grenfell Tower disaster, managers announced they were prepared to free some of us on night shifts in order to allow us to volunteer to help the residents of Grenfell Tower during the day. Then they decided they'd only cancel one night shift instead of several. And finally, they cancelled the plan altogether! Yes, they show compassion - but only as long as their bonuses aren't at risk! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/7/17]



**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

**When the bosses resort to blackmail, Unite looks the other way...**

Workers at BMW's four British factories have now voted on a "final and reshaped" company proposal designed to end all opposition to the closure of its final salary pension scheme. At the time of writing, the full result isn't yet out. But when the proposal was presented in small meetings on 26 June, there wasn't much reshaping in it. In particular, BMW had not increased the compensation for the workers concerned - £22,000 in cash over three years, or £25,000 if paid into their new defined contribution pension pots.

There was one big change, however - BMW's blackmail to secure a Yes vote. They were now threatening to respond to any further strike action by sacking all workers in the final salary scheme. These workers would then be forced to re-apply for their jobs and sign new contracts putting them in the DC scheme - but with no compensation payments.

Had BMW got assurances from Unite that it would remain passive? We don't know. But the facts are there. The only adequate response to such a provocation would have been an immediate



walkout. But instead of organising the response that this blackmail deserved, the Unite leaders happily went along with this "democratic" farce of a ballot, claiming to be "neutral". Which was just another way of washing their hands of the whole issue! ☐

**• How is it rigged?**

We know when it's too hot! But if anyone doubted that the obscure rulebook assessment is meant to protect production and not our health, this week proves it. Readings of temperature and humidity are taken hourly at "agreed points" and an average plotted, heat relief kicking in if the "effective temperature" exceeds 75°F (about 25°C). So is one of the agreed points in a fridge? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford Mini 21/06/17]

**• A tepid response**

Indeed with Tuesday's temperatures equally hot, if not hotter, it was a shock that no heat relief was offered on earlier or nights. The closest BMW came was giving out bottles of warm water, delivered by pallet. Surely these masters of "Just in Time" could have organised ice-cool drinks straight off refrigerated trucks? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford Mini 21/06/17]

**• Never in time**

Actually Just in Time got BMW's fingers burnt last week thanks to problems at an Italian subsidiary of Bosch making an electrical part for the steering. Not only were all German plants making models Series1-4 affected but also factories in China and South Africa. Tens of thousands were laid off on WTA.. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford Mini 21/06/17]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

**• Ford's cowboy outfits**

We heard that Dagenham Plant Protection was raided by police who picked up some G4S workers (and a manager) for allegedly being here illegally. It's outrageous that the police were even allowed in, but we guess that's hard to stop. Back in the day they'd have been prevented from sticking their noses in by shop stewards... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 14/06/17]

**• Back in-house! pay the rate for the job!**

This incident is above all a comment on Ford's outsourcing and the abuse of workers from cowboy multinational G4S - which has tried to get away without legalising them and paying below the minimum wage, hoping that they'd be too afraid to say anything. But that's

where we can all step in.... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 14/06/17]

**• All for one and one for all!**

Yes, we should be very clear that we're in solidarity with all outsourced workers - our class cannot agree with a system which divides us up for whatever reason and G4S and all other workers should be able to rely on the rest of the Ford workforce to stand with them and defend them. It's Ford that put them in this position. And we should help make Ford pay. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 14/06/17]

**• Putting this "screwge" in her place**

On this subject, we hear that 70% of the Hamton cleaners rejected their pay offer. Right! They need a living wage - and not the National Unliving Minimum Wage! We all pay the same bills to live.



So watch out 007 and the rest of this notorious "Family"! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 14/06/17]

**• Where's the pay deal?**

What about the Ford pay talks coming up? We can predict that we're going to get a long sob-story about Brexit and what-have-you from the bosses who'll tell us they just can't afford our demands. Then our problem will be to prevent the FNJNC's full-time union-side steak&chips brigade, who usually misrepresent us, from falling for this... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 28/06/17]

**A law to tie our hands is a law to break**

After a ticket staff member was unfairly sacked and two others disciplined following an incident at London Bridge station, the RMT decided to call a strike and conducted a ballot. However, only 34.4% of those who were balloted, actually voted - below the 50% threshold required under the Tories'

2016 Trade Union Act, which therefore invalidated the ballot. Before this new law, the strike could have gone ahead: of the 1,290 members who actually voted, 1,039 that is, over 80%, supported action.

However London Underground bosses immediately invoked the new act to prevent the strike. This is the first time it has been used, since it came into force in March. Of course, the London Assembly's

(Tory) transport spokesperson said "it is a welcome sign of progress that this strike was blocked".

However, if the government thinks it has legislated strikes away, it's in for some disappointing: postal and hospital workers have already shown that they can take illegal, unofficial action. And, after all, didn't the working class movement develop in the first place by breaking the bosses' laws?

## Middle East

On 5 June, a low-level conflict (for the time being, at least) broke out in the war-torn Middle East. This time, it was the Saudi regime declaring a full-scale blockade against Qatar, closing down their common border, thereby depriving this tiny state of its main source of food. Diplomatic relations were suspended while Qatari flights were banned from using Saudi air space.

This time, however, the Saudi regime failed to drag along its current allies in the lethal 27-month bombing campaign it leads against Yemen. So, in order to pump up its motley "coalition of the willing" against Qatar, it had to look for more allies. Eventually, Egypt officially joined - which was predictable, since its dictator has long been enforcing its own private blockade against Qatar - and so did, of all countries, the distant Maldives Republic, which has no dealings with Qatar, but had just sold a whole number of its islands to Saudi property developers!

### *The wrath of a strongman*

What caused the Saudi monarchs' wrath against Qatar? Officially, they accuse Qatar of financing terrorism and the Muslim Brotherhood, of showing no support for their anti-Iranian policy and of running a satellite channel (Al Jazeera) which provides a platform to all the critics of the Gulf's regimes (except the Qatari regime, of course!).

Regarding the funding of terrorism

## Chagos islands

A UN resolution has belatedly condemned the British state for having mistreated, for the past half-a-century, the nearly 1,500-strong native population of the Chagos Archipelago, in the Pacific Ocean.

Originally the Chagos Islands were part of the British colony of Mauritius. But in 1965, as Mauritius was about to become independent, the then Labour government formed the British Indian

## Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Trump's tweets

and the Muslim Brotherhood, this is, of course, the pot calling the kettle black! In Syria, for instance, Qatar provided funds both to a Muslim Brotherhood-dominated National Syrian Council and to ISIS. But Saudi Arabia had, long before, provided a safe haven to offshoots of the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. And since then, it has helped Al Nusrah, the Syrian former affiliate of al-Qaeda, to form a more "respectable" coalition of militias, which also received funds from... Qatar! Meanwhile, in Yemen, Saudi Arabia has, for a long time been, the mentor and financier of the local Brotherhood, Islah.

However, the Saudis' main gripe against Qatar is due to the fact that its very wealthy Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) can afford to ignore their diktats over Iran. Indeed, Qatar used the US-Iran thaw under Obama, to embark on a joint development of the huge underwater gas reserves it shares with Iran. Meanwhile, the QIA also plan to take advantage of the future reconstruction of Syria, in particular by reviving the idea of a pipe-line crossing Syria to the Mediterranean harbour of Lattakia - a plan that Saudi Arabia has always vocally opposed, because it would give a competitive advantage to both Iran and Iraq.

### *Imperialist meddling*

But, more importantly, there is no doubt that the Saudis took advantage of Trump's visit in May, when



he blamed Iran for all the terrorist activity in the region. This was obvious nonsense, but it served Trump's demagoguery against Iran. The Saudis' accusations against Qatar, were designed to win Trump's endorsement - which he duly tweeted, despite having just given the go-ahead to the sale of £12bn worth of US F-15s to Qatar! Since then, Trump's ministers have been trying to calm things down. But the damage is done, raising tensions by another notch.

Whether this is just Trump's loose-cannon behaviour or whether this behaviour conceals some complex "divide and rule" game concocted by US strategists, makes no difference. The fact is that the constant interference of the imperialist powers in the region's affairs keeps stoking up more explosive potential in the Middle East. ☐

## Still waiting for justice!

Ocean Territory (BIOT) by splitting the Chagos Islands from Mauritius. This was in breach of UN rules, but no-one really cared since the main beneficiary was to be the US army. Indeed within a few years, the Chagossians were deported to neighbouring territories to make space for a US military base. This was how the largest US air and navy base in the Pacific Ocean came into being, on the Chagos island of Diego Garcia. Ever

since that time the Chagossians and their descendants have been fighting to return home. However, every British government treated their legitimate demands with total contempt.

The era of colonisation may have ended decades ago, but the colonial arrogance of the British state still has to be rooted out! And the odds are, that it will take more than a UN resolution to do that!

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](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

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