

WORKERS' fight



No 133 - 12 May 2022

price 30p

<http://www.w-fight.org>

contact@w-fight.org

ISSN 2040-400X

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

THEY WANT TO TURN THE SCREW - BUT WE HOLD THE SCREWDRIVER!

What irony! Just a few days before the Queen's speech, focusing on "Brexit opportunities", the republican, anti-Brexit party, Sinn Fein, won Northern Ireland's Assembly election!

So now Sinn Fein leads the Assembly for the very first time ever. Except that thanks to Johnson's NI Protocol to "get Brexit done", this opportunity has been obstructed!

The pro-Brexit Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) is refusing to appoint a deputy first minister, unless Johnson gets rid of the Protocol's customs post in the sea between Britain and NI. And that means the Assembly remains suspended in mid-air, as it has 5 times before this and for 8 years out of the 23 years of its existence!

Divided state, divided class

This is because conditions in the 1998 Peace Agreement built into the Assembly's constitution the same sectarian divide represented today by the so-called "peace walls" in working class neighbourhoods which separate nationalist from unionist and Catholic from Protestant. So the executive must have 2 first ministers, one nationalist and one unionist, with equal powers. Otherwise, no devolved NI government!

However, the agreement also stipulates that the border between the southern Irish Republic, inside the EU, and the North outside it, must remain open. Which is why the EU/UK customs post is sitting in the only place it can be - the middle of the Irish sea - and why NI remains inside the EU customs union.

Of course, the real reason for the DUP's demand has nothing to do with any problems arising out of customs checks. It's just a last ditch attempt to defend Unionists' special status, which, after 101 years, is coming to a natural, demographic, end.



Anyway, the majority (55.8%) in the North voted in 2016 to remain in the EU. Common sense would dictate that the border which needs be got rid of today, is not only the one in the sea, but the one on the land, between North and South, to reunite the long-divided island of Ireland. And that could now be on the cards.

Unsurprisingly, the reactionary Foreign Secretary, Liz Truss, is choosing to appease the Unionist reactionaries and threatening to break the Protocol. But that may not work. The NI population is unlikely to accept yet another half-cocked "British solution".

Preparing to turn the screw

Another "first", was Prince Charles reading the "Queen's speech", introducing Johnson's latest raft of laws to help protect the capitalists from the crisis and make the working class pay for it. There were 38 bills outlining how the screw will be turned.

Among them was a "Brexit Freedoms" (!) Bill to "free" workers of any remaining rights left under EU Laws. A Public Order

bill will curtail freedom of protest and the right to stage boycotts. More public contracts (including for running trains) will go to cronies, out of which they'll squeeze profits from ever-fewer workers, while they ruin public services. And of course, conspicuous by its absence, was anything to absorb the shock of the skyrocketing cost of living!

In these "challenging times" the government "will defend democracy and freedom... in Ukraine", but not Rwanda, where it's done a deal with a murderous, de facto military dictatorship, to take custody of "illegal" (desperate) refugees!

Yes, the reality hidden behind this jewel-encrusted Royal pantomime, is an ugly class society. It's a reminder of what needs to be chucked out, from the monarchy and the Lords, to the Commons' democratic smokescreen, which hide the capitalists' dictatorship over the working class. But if they need to go to all that trouble, it's because they fear our resistance, and know full well that their class depends entirely on ours. □

Ukraine

Speaking at the Lord Mayor's Easter Banquet, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss took the opportunity to revive Cold War rhetoric. According to her, western allies were working out a "new Marshall Plan" for Ukraine. In fact she was referring to the post-WW2 multi-billion aid package to Western Europe provided by the US and against the USSR, which, among other things, initially had the aim of "push(ing) Russia out of the whole of Ukraine" - which had, of course, been occupied by Germany. But then Churchill sat down with Stalin and they carved the region up between them.

Even if Truss had to backtrack on her call to send warplanes to Ukraine, which is against current NATO policy, she's expressing the real will of the US to crank up the offensive against Russia. So after Johnson announced an extra £300m in military aid to Ukraine, the US literally brought in the heavy guns: US president Biden is urging Congress to vote an

Fuelling the war even further



extraordinary £26.4bn aid package, of which £16bn would be spent on military aid. If passed, this would outstrip all previous military help that Ukraine has received by far.

What this means however, is that the US and its NATO allies are more

and more engaged in fuelling this war, which they hope will last long enough to weaken Putin's regime. And all this, regardless of the already terrible price paid by the Ukrainian, but also the Russian soldiers and civilians! ☐

• "Homes for Ukraine": gone missing

The "Homes for Ukraine" scheme, launched on 18 March, is meant to allow Ukrainian refugees to enter Britain as long as they are sponsored by a "host" who is willing to provide accommodation for at least 6 months. But entering Britain even under this scheme is not straightforward. The Ukrainian refugees still need to apply for a visa and get a biometric scan. And then they can be left waiting in limbo for weeks.

It appears that the Home Office lost the "data" of all those who applied for a visa in the first few days of the scheme...

Not to mention the fact that adults may have received their visas, but not their children or babies - and vice versa.

As a result, only 15% of the 86,100 Ukrainians who tried the sponsorship route had made it to Britain by the 5th May. And 800 of them were still waiting for visas after applying within the first two weeks of the scheme opening. A class action lawsuit against the Home Office is being prepared over "inordinate and unreasonable delays" in processing hundreds of visa applications.

And now on top of it all, it appears that

background checks and visits to premises on offer weren't done. So up to 30% of would-be sponsors turn out to have "ulterior motives". And matchmaking families via Facebook, which is being tried to speed up the process, has even more potential pitfalls.

But despite this fiasco and the pending legal action against Home Secretary Patel, the government rushed to publicly defend itself stating that it had "launched one of the fastest and biggest visa schemes in UK history"!

• King's Cross Station: not welcoming all refugees?

The Ukrainian Displaced Persons Travel Scheme opened on the 20th of March to help Ukrainians to travel to Britain. It's an extension of the European scheme and under it, all British railway companies offer free travel.

At London King's Cross, workers have been welcoming and helping many of these families who are travelling up to the North, or to Scotland. But they've been instructed to help only those refugees who hold the "correct" passport! In fact

the rule is that the "free" travel isn't open to all refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine. Only those with a Ukrainian passport and a ticket can make use of the scheme and only within 48 hours of their arrival. So what about refugees from Ukraine who have another nationality? Or any other refugees who are fleeing the war zones of Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria or Congo and try to cross the Channel? These are the questions workers are asking themselves. Surely similar help should be provided to all? But it isn't!

Of course, no-one really expects anything else from Johnson's and Patel's xenophobic government, other than hypocritical gestures. They give with one hand and take away with the other - in the name of "humanitarian aid" - while they fuel this war to help pile up the profits of British capitalists in the arms and oil trade.



The Russian workers and the Ukraine war

The impact of Russia's invasion in Ukraine was almost immediate for the Russian working class. The devaluation of the rouble due to Western sanctions has pushed inflation up to 20% and pushed many into destitution. Shortages already began just a week after war started. And where goods can be found, they are too expensive. Russians must queue at "special markets" to get basic products such as buckwheat and sugar, even some medicines. As banks closed, people tried their luck to get cash out; families economically dependent on their members abroad, could not receive any money.

And then there is the huge wave of unemployment, which can only get worse with the halt in production by manufacturing companies. The first to be hit was McDonald's, where

62,000 people were employed; followed by Renault, with 45,000 workers, and Ikea, with 15,000 workers. In mid-April, Moscow's mayor estimated that around 200,000 workers in the capital were on the verge of losing their jobs. Of course, neither the capitalist class nor the Russian bureaucracy cares about the future of all these workers. They may temporarily "compensate" them, but workers are still left in an ever-more insecure situation. And this, in the middle of a war for which they could be recruited at any point.

In fact, in early April, Putin ordered the conscription of 134,500 new recruits. This was after asserting that only officers and war professionals were being sent to Ukraine. The working and the poor families who don't have the means to send their sons abroad and out of

harm's way, will be further paying the cost of this war, with their sons' and daughters' lives.

Then there is the reinforcement by the state of the police and legal powers of the courts. Those opposing the war face specific new charges. Depending on whether they "discredit" the Russian military, or spread "false information" about the war, they can get fines ranging from a month's to a year's worth of pay. Or be sent to prison without trial for up to fifteen years.

In this repressive environment, only very few activists are able to express the joint interests of Ukrainian and Russian workers. However, to fight this military and economic massacre, there's only one solution: that the working classes join forces, and not only in Russia and Ukraine, but across the world. □

30 years since the war in Bosnia: what the imperialists call "peace"!

This April marked 30 years since the start of the Bosnian war (1992-1995). In this, the bloodiest war in Europe since World War II, more than 100,000 were killed and more than 2 million people became refugees during the conflict.

As the war in Ukraine drags on, it is worth recalling just one episode in the long history of imperialist powers inflaming nationalist tensions and divisions in Eastern Europe - with deadly results.

The breaking up of Yugoslavia

In fact the Bosnian war was only the latest stage in a civil war which had begun 7 years before, as rival nationalist demagogues sought to carve their own fiefdoms out of what had been the Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia had been made up of six republics - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, established under former partisan fighter and communist revolutionary, Tito, after the end of World War II.

Until the 1980s, the federation had provided a viable framework for the various nationalities to live and work together harmoniously - and we should be clear: almost all "Yugoslavians" whether Muslim, Christian orthodox, or non-religious (which was the case for a majority) shared Southern Slav roots. This

was not an "ethnic" conflict, even if the term "ethnic cleansing" was coined here, to describe the barbaric methods of the protagonists, who seized territory and "cleansed" it of their rivals. If there were differences between people, they were rather linguistic and cultural - and almost everyone spoke Serbo-Croat.

Imperialism's bloody role

With the death of Tito, and the fight for his succession, nationalist tensions emerged sharply, as rival cliques of politicians cynically used "the right to self-determination" to carve political futures for themselves. These cliques were made up of utterly bankrupt nationalists who were only too willing to play on religious or any other differences. And they were duly supported and aided by the imperialist powers right from the start. But it was just such rivalries that ended up in a catastrophic, genocidal situation, first in Bosnia and then in Kosovo.

Not only that, but it is also worth remembering the role of the Dayton agreement, which was negotiated by the imperialist powers, with the US leading the pack, for ensuring so-called peace. As the US intervened, with 60,000 NATO troops on the ground, ethnic cleansing was intensified. Territories were won by one side or the other: by the Croatian army driving the Serbs out

of Krajina; by the Serbian militias as they seized the enclaves of Srebrenica and Zepa, exterminating tens of thousands of "Muslim" inhabitants; and even by the Croat-Muslim forces in their advance into western Bosnia.

Creating unviable micro-states

To cut a long story short, the US intervened to institutionalise the 'transfers' of populations that the nationalists had been carrying out with their deadly means. In the end, Bosnia was de facto partitioned into three semi-autonomous zones divided by rivers of blood - the Bosnian Croat-Muslim Federation, which includes a mini Croat state (Herzegovina), and the Serbian Republic of Bosnia, with the murderers of yesterday sitting in government. No surprise then, that today another break-up of Bosnia threatens, with Bosnian-Serb leader Milorad Dodik now threatening to secede.

It was this bloody and ruthless partitioning of Bosnia into rival micro-states under the leadership of nationalist war-criminals that the imperialists paraded as peace in the Balkans. This past should make us highly sceptical of their interventions in Ukraine today, where once again they pretend to defend the national rights of the Ukrainian people against Putin's aggression. □

Their society

The anti-migrant Nationalities and Borders Bill received Royal Assent on 28 April and thus became law. An amendment requiring that the Bill be compatible with the International Refugee Convention was defeated in the Lords, prompting the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to say that "the new law undermines established international refugee protection laws" and "risks causing very real suffering to vulnerable people". An understatement. This law introduces a two-tier asylum system. It criminalises all those who arrive in Britain via "irregular" means. It reduces the chances for migrants to be considered refugees, by, among many other things, removing appeal procedures, introducing penalties for late submission of evidence, and giving the Immigration Tribunal additional powers against lawyers who defend migrants!

Home Secretary Patel cynically claims that this new system will "protect those in genuine need". Of course it won't. But what she doesn't say plainly is that these

• Reviving concentration camps in Rwanda for refugees

The family of the Rwandan born, Paul Rusesabagina has filed a \$400m (£307m) lawsuit against Paul Kagame's Rwandan government for his kidnap and arrest in 2020, when he was flown to Rwanda after booking a private flight to Burundi.

Paul Rusesabagina is the hero depicted in the 2004 Oscar-nominated film, *Hotel Rwanda*, which told how he'd saved from death 1,200 Tutsis by sheltering them in the Mille Collines hotel, during the terrible Rwandan genocide of 1994, when hundreds of thousands of Tutsis (as well as many Hutus) were massacred.

• Israel did it too

The government was full of positive buzzwords like "innovative" to describe its nasty deal with Rwanda. In fact, this is a copy of a scheme from eight years ago which Rwanda agreed with Israel. Thousands of African migrants who had sought asylum in Israel, crossing at its border with Egypt (which has since been closed and fortified) were transferred to Rwanda, and in fact also to Uganda. They were left without support or waged work. Many of them became destitute, with nowhere to go.

Britain's never-ending hostile environment

The latest attack on migrants comes with further patrolling of working class neighbourhoods. In fact it's Patel's version of the worst aspects of Theresa May's "hostile environment for immigrants" which culminated in the Windrush scandal. So now the Home Office is to send immigration officers to 25 local government authorities across England - to local

Nationalities and Borders Act



measures are meant to help promote the idea that there are too many immigrants in Britain, so that they can be blamed for the NHS not coping, cuts in benefits and the lack of housing. While in fact, by the government's own assessment, migrants get less out of the welfare system and provide proportionally more to the Treasury compared to the rest of the population.

But of course, blaming migrants has

always been a way to divert attention from the government's policies, which have led directly to the crumbling of the NHS, the chronic shortage of social housing and the spread of low-paid, precarious jobs - helping the bosses squeeze even more profits out of the working class - precisely because they want to prevent us from recognising migrant workers as our class allies against their system! □

He has been a personal and political thorn in Kagame's side ever since the movie was released. And as a Hutu, and later leader of an opposition coalition, the Rwanda Movement for Democratic Change (MRCD), he was forced into exile in 2005. He is now in jail in Rwanda, sentenced to 25 years for "terrorism".

What has happened to Rusesabagina is typical of Kagame's methods against his opponents, although more often they are simply murdered by assassins. This is what happened to Kagame's former intelligence chief, Patrick Karegeya in

2013, while in exile in South Africa. In the Great Lakes region of Congo, Kagame's RPF army has committed its own mass atrocities.

None of this has stopped British Home Secretary, Priti Patel, from arranging to send refugees who enter Britain "illegally" and particularly by crossing the Channel from France in a dinghy, into Kagame's custody in Rwanda. She says Rwanda is "a country which respects human rights". Yes, indeed, from one such country to another...

The only difference with Patel's scheme is that she is completely shameless about it. Israel was never prepared to acknowledge openly that it had made this deal with Rwanda, even after 4 years of deportations, which were regularly protested against by asylum seekers in Israel. According to Rwanda's president Kagame, it was just one friendly country helping out another! The scheme has now ended. Israel's walls, fences and shoot-to-kill army are apparently keeping all unwanted refugees out.

It's likely that Patel discovered the Rwanda "innovation" back in 2017, when she held those unofficial meetings with Netanyahu and his officials "while on holiday". When the press found out and leaked the story, it cost her her job as Theresa May's International Development Secretary. As for Kagame, he has been able to add Johnson to the list of leaders of rich and powerful countries, from Netanyahu to Tony Blair, who endorse his murderous regime.

to services such as housing or hospital-based healthcare, for want of the "right papers".

Officers will also be able to pass details of undocumented migrants to immigration enforcement officers and accelerate deportations and so called "repatriations". Nobody should be surprised by this. But it makes the overturning of this most right-wing of all governments all the more urgent. □

Costs up? Wages up!

At the beginning of May, the Bank of England gave its latest forecast. It said the economy would shrink by the end of this year, and that inflation would increase above 10%, by the "official measure". But this official measure doesn't reveal the real picture.

They say, for example, that food inflation is 5.9%. But staple foods, such as a bag of pasta from Tesco, have risen by 32%. And wheat prices have risen by 66% since last year! This would add an average £271 a year, to food bills. And of course energy bills went up by 54% in April, and are set to rise again in October, by at least another 32%.

Then there's the fall in the value of sterling to its lowest rate against the dollar in 18 months, pushing the cost of imports even higher..

But don't worry, because the government's got all sorts of "innovative ways to ease pressure on household finances", without running up new costs to the Treasury... Yes, like cutting the regulations on children's dressing gowns!

In the meantime, the average wage is

• Where to make savings

"Lord Rose of Monewden", chairman of Asda, has called on the government to do more to tackle the cost of living crisis, warning that food prices will remain high. But what he means, is that he wants government to help out the supermarkets, by cutting regulations - or as he puts it "make things simpler"!

• The energy crisis at home

Just 2 weeks into the April energy price cap rise, the Office for National Statistics found that 40% of people were already struggling to pay for gas and electricity, after the energy cap rose by 54%. And that many are facing much higher rises - up to 100%! This

• Surprise, surprise, BA can't fly without its crew!

British Airways has had to cut 10% of its scheduled flights - 8,000 of them - just as other European airlines are expecting more passengers to fly again this summer!

And why? Well, this airline, as many will remember, fired 10,000 of its staff during the pandemic. And now it can't find enough workers; it only managed to rehire fewer than 3,000..!

In fact in 2020, not content with firing the 10,000, the company tried to force the rest of its 20,000 workers to sign up to worse contracts, a version of the infamous "fire and rehire". And since it didn't succeed, it created a subsidiary, called BA Euroflyer, which operates flights to Europe from Gatwick, with pilots and crew on cheaper, more "flexible" contracts. Which of course, all remains perfectly acceptable in this capitalist system...

So today, BA has tripped up on its own

Costs up? Wages up!



going up just 4%, which means workers face severe cuts in real wages. But on the brighter side, there are more and more strikes being announced over pay. And even the TUC (albeit rather toothless these days) is protesting that "Working people have had enough. Everything's going up but our wages". They invite

However, there's no question of making things simpler for the consumer! He says - and we've heard a lot of this kind of advice lately - that "We all now have to maybe change our behaviours. I will personally look at what things I need and what things I don't need". As if workers had anything in common with

applies to some who pay by direct debit for instance, and who are coming off a fixed term deal.

And of course the price cap is due to rise by another 32%, in October, at which point the number of people who can't afford their bills will be even higher

misdoings. As for the crews, the boot is now on the other foot so let's hope they start kicking!

• There goes Rees Mogg's "Free Trade"!

Implementing Brexit, as planned, is somewhat disastrous for British businesses and even with the tweaks and compromises it's making a hole in their pockets.

We hear that ultra Brexiteer, Jacob Rees-Mogg, unofficially the "MP for the 18th century" but also "Minister for Brexit Opportunities", admits as much. Remember the pretence that Brexit wouldn't harm British food standards and in fact (said the Brexiteers) it was an "opportunity" to set them even higher than the EU's?

Well, the (already delayed) checks on food imports from the EU which were scheduled to start in July have

Their society

everyone to "Join the trade union movement in London on June 18, to tell this government: we DEMAND better!" Yes we do demand better, but we also know it means we have to FIGHT, and not just the government, but the capitalists hiding behind them! ☐

this ex-boss of Marks and Spencer (on more than £1m a year), and lifelong peer! He adds that supermarkets should "cut out every extra cost". Maybe they could start with "Lord Rose" himself, CEO mega-salaries, and shareholder dividends!

- and just as the weather gets colder! But the situation is even worse for 4.5m who have to rely on prepayment meters, who pay for energy at a far higher rate than those who pay by direct debit. As usual the poorest are always the most penalised.

been delayed once more. And maybe indefinitely! Rees-Mogg says that they would add so much more to prices (up to 71%!), that if implemented they would be "an act of self-harm"! So they've been shelved and Rees-Mogg says he is now aiming for a new import-checking system by the end of 2023...

So for now, the EU checks British exports, adding tariffs where needed, but British officials allow EU produce through check- and tariff-free! Not really a "level playing field": EU exporters get a free ride but British exporters pay...

Never mind though! It seems Rees-Mogg is either innumerate or has an overdeveloped sense of irony. He explained with a straight face that this is a great example of "free trade"! And that it would result in an annual savings of £1bn a year, adding that "free trade is hugely advantageous to consumers". But on which side of the Channel?

King's Cross railway station (London)**National railway strike is on the cards!**

After a 2-year long pay freeze, the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union (RMT) is balloting 40,000 of us for strike action. The ballot will finish on the 24 May. If the strike goes ahead this will be the first "national" strike in 40 years, affecting 15 Train Operating Companies (out of 22). The dispute is not only about pay. There is a plan to save £22bn. To start with, Network Rail (NR) plans to cut over 2,500 maintenance jobs, but many more jobs are under threat.

Because of the way the law is framed, each company is being balloted separately, even if, at least for workers in the 15 companies involved, the vote

is simultaneous. But there's another problem: the leaders of the 2 other rail unions, the white collar union, TSSA and the train drivers' union, ASLEF, aren't balloting for strike so far, despite the fact that we're all in the same boat! We hear that ASLEF might call a vote among *some* drivers, if it cannot do a deal over pay with their company bosses. The news from TSSA is slightly more hopeful. But it still means a staggered result and at best a delay in the strike if action is to be coordinated.

In the meantime, one boss from Network Rail, has been recruiting (!) for the strike by telling the workforce that



if they want higher pay they should "probably have worked harder at school". And LNER's managing director has helpfully explained that "casting a ballot is unnecessary and counterproductive". Which it is, from his point of view, but not from ours. ☐

• We are voting for a strike

Finally, we've received the RMT ballot, and about time. It covers 15 of the 22 companies. Only. What about the others? Are they meant to run trains when we don't? Will they? Regardless of the legal position which is used to prevent workers uniting together, we've every reason to organise a total shutdown of the railway. We all have a common problem: pay which hasn't kept up with inflation. And the job cuts, including on Network Rail, have to be stopped! [Workers' Platform King's X, 04/05/22]

• The more anxious the better

BTW managers seem very worried about the ballot now. They're going around asking us, individually if we're going to strike. And that's even before the ballot is completed...! [Workers' Platform King's X, 04/05/22]

• Time to fight for the other 2!

On-board LNER chefs are doing 3 workers' jobs. Not only do we have to cook, but we are told to take orders and deliver the food. Even hosts are doing 3 people's jobs. Striking against the overwork that management has been

forcing on us by refusing to recruit, will be a start towards changing this! We look forward to it! [Workers' Platform King's X, 04/05/22]

• On the road to victory?

Churchill cleaners were meant to be on strike for 11 days starting from last Wednesday, but after 6 days the bosses have asked for talks again. So for the time being our strike is suspended. We will be going out again, unless we they agree sick pay and travel allowances - and £15/hour (plus...)! [Workers' Platform King's X, 04/05/22]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**Together with Post Office workers!**

Crown Post Office workers from 114 Offices went on strike on 3 May against the pay freeze imposed on them during the pandemic (they worked all the way through it!) and the miserly 2% (!) pay "rise" offered for 2022-23! This is an 8% pay cut, when inflation is close to 10%! Yet many staff are getting barely above the minimum wage as it is! The cut in real wages is meant to be "cushioned" by a piddling £250 one-off lump sum. This is worse than an insult!

There was an overwhelming vote for strike (97.3% on a 70.2% turnout). But right from the start it was clear that a

strike would not be very effective if only Crown Post Office workers took action. Over the past 20 years, thousands of Post Offices have been shut or sold to private outlets like WHSmith, so that now Crown branches represent a tiny minority of Post Offices. And yet, Post Office workers in the so-called "agency" or "outreach" branches are in the same boat as Crown office workers!

However there was, and still is, every possibility of taking really effective action. Because the Post Office and Royal Mail are not only utterly interdependent, but all of us workers are in the very same



same union. And in fact Royal Mail has now come up with the same insulting pay offer for RM workers: 2% with strings attached, plus 1.5% with more strings! The only difference is that at Royal Mail, we're 115,000-strong! By joining ranks - but also by taking the fight into our own hands - we could surely win the pay rise we all need, together! ☐

• We're not playing games

RM are really playing games over the pay deal: we've been told so far that there's a "choice"! 2% with short strings, or 3.5% with long strings! Is this a joke? The strings we already guessed, like Sunday working, two-tier workforce, annualised hours, all sorts of disguised cuts, and ways to cut overtime payments. It's obvious that we cannot agree to any of this, and that we will need to go on strike. [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 04/05/22]

• No deals behind closed doors!

On top of that, it was a "closed" offer, meaning that the details had to be "leaked". There are more talks this week apparently, with the union saying "unless Royal Mail give us an inflation no strings pay deal by Friday (6 May) we will serve the 4 weeks notice under the DRP process and commence a ballot for strike action..." Why wait? [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 04/05/22]

• We don't agree!

It's definitely a good thing that the local branch is trying to keep us informed about what's going on over the "friction" with management "over the last few weeks" with regard to the Parcel Sorting Machine-related job cuts (or as management calls them, "Voluntary Redundancies"). We assume that they agree with us that these job cuts are out of the question? [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 04/05/22]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

R&H: now it's a fight for our strike!

The fight by Rudolph & Hellmann Logistics workmates for a pay rise continues! After two strike ballots overwhelmingly in favour, Unite officials called eight days of strikes. But 5 days before the first strike day, on 26 April, they suspended the action, on the strength of a lousy revised "offer" from the company: £1 short of the £12.50 minimum rate we demanded! So another ballot took place. Over 90% of us duly rejected it! Industrial action finally went ahead on 10 May, with 80-100 strikers on the picket line! And though BMW's lines were not halted, they lost at least one third of production.

But then, Unite suddenly called off

the following day's strike, in order to hold a fourth ballot, on yet another offer - still far short of what we want, but they thought it was good enough to consider! Some of us didn't even get the message cancelling the strike as it was posted to a WhatsApp group not everyone is on, so we only found out when we turned up to picket...

Unite's organisers defend the union officials' bad behaviour by complaining that it's R&H which is "behaving badly"! They sure are, but by mediating the offers and calling off strikes, the union officials are helping R&H to get away with their games. If this strike was under our own control, there'd be no self-styled



"leaders" to bargain behind closed doors or to snap their fingers, out or in! We'd then be able to organise an effective strike, involving the whole of the BMW workforce, including Gi, G&P and the rest of our mates in R&H. And we'd stay out until the bosses agreed to our demands!☐

• Get rid of this ladder!

Unite's bulletin says we're rejecting R&H's staggered timing of the pay rise. But it's the amount we get which counts - and we need it straight away and on the basis of a one year deal! In other words, it's not what we demanded, and not enough! Nor do we accept 3 tiers of pay based on length of service - a new string that Unite hasn't even mentioned. It would mean that it would take 2 years to reach the highest rate! We demand one (much higher!) hourly rate from day one! [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 09/05/22]

• More of this please!

Last Friday, we all had different shift

patterns. At BMW, we stopped working at 5pm because of a fire drill. Then we were sent home at 7 - apparently, due to problems in the Paint Shop. But at least this time we got paid for the missing hours - as we should! [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 09/05/22]

• Wasting our precious time!

So why was the night shift brought in? Most of us had to wait around until 3am? What's the point of spending Friday night in the plant with nothing to do? [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 09/05/22]

• Sunday is ours, not wta!

What's more, when we came back to work

after the 2 days shutdown, there were regular breakdowns in production... and so yet again, we in the Paint Shop were asked in for Sunday overtime..! The managers say this will allow us to boost our Work Time Account, but what's the point, when they keep eating it up with midweek shutdowns? [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 09/05/22]

• Harness-less minis?

Has the main harnesses area come through a wormhole from the 1920s? There are no tools for the heavy manual tasks, which give us constant muscle cramps. And we hear the new models to come are to have even more connections... [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 09/05/22]

Ford Dagenham Engine Plant

• Forewarned is forearmed

On Tuesday at half-7, foreman on the Chicken Farm got together and stopped the lines, instructing many of us, to go to the Den - Lion, Panther and Tiger workers included. They announced out of the blue that Tiger schedule was now 600: no notice, no fore-warning, no explanation. And then these clever clogs didn't leave enough of us here on the Farm to even do 600. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• They cannot plan ahead?

We heard that the (impromptu!!) down-scaling of Tiger engine production (after we'd been told to build-build-build for the last month!), was due to falling demand for engines from the plants in Valencia and Saarlouis. So is there really any excuse for the messy, hasty, and pushy way foremen did things on Tuesday? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• None so blind...

And now, how fast do Den managers think Lion workers can go? Some of these muddle-heads come to the line

to ask us why there are gaps, here, or there..? When the answer is obvious: we can't squeeze two tasks into one. But seeing the obvious isn't one of their strengths. If they have any. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• Time to start growling

So Lion's apparently behind schedule, judging from the line speed-ups and managers jumping up and down like jack-in-the-boxes. Was this why they asked us on the Farm to pile-up eggs like mad? Just to free us up, so they could then send us into the Lions' Den!? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• Why should we help?

Indeed. We're also asked to come in on Saturdays (3 more to come) to build extra Lion engines, only because management is trying to run production in DDC without enough workers. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• Still on the job

As expected, by now all block B mates have been spread out over the other lines. And for now heads B carries on. But it's still meant to close before shutdown. The



(slightly) better news is that if we have to be moved out of the area, that company service will be the decider... Which makes a change. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• Sorted!

By the way, since Lion engines are in demand right now (apparently for the new Ranger), and machining is going up to 3 shifts, the "spare" Panther machining workmates can surely go there to help... if they'd like to? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

• Which century again?

Here we are, almost a quarter of the way into the 21st century, and Ford still hasn't provided toilets, washing and showering facilities for G4S security workmates... Unbelievable. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/05/22]

Pakistan

Pakistan's Imran Khan was ousted as prime minister on 8 April, after just 4 years in office. It was par for the course; no Pakistani prime minister has ever completed a full five-year term. But he is the first to be kicked out by a no-confidence motion tabled by the opposition. He tried to block it, but in the end the Supreme court ruled it valid. So now Shehbaz Sharif, of the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), and brother of 3-times Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has been voted in by parliament and is meant to remain in office until the next election in October 2023.

Commentators say Khan's undoing was his unwillingness to kowtow to American imperialism and the army. He'd criticised the

Imran Khan leaves, the generals remain

"war on terror", claiming Pakistan paid the price for an American war. In February, he sought trade deals in Moscow, just before the Ukraine invasion. Moreover, China has big investments in Pakistan. Khan also rejected the army chief's nominees for senior military appointments in a country where the army controls much of the economy.

The Washington-based Brookings Institute spelled out more clearly the background to Imran Khan's ousting: "...the White House has given Pakistan a relative cold shoulder to date - irked by the war in Afghanistan ending with a Taliban takeover and ... with then Prime Minister Imran Khan publicly criticizing the US as it happened". It argues that "the change in

leadership in Pakistan presents the United States with an opportunity to reset its long-troubled relationship with the world's fifth most populous country" and adds that "America also has an interest in balancing somewhat the influence of China, Pakistan's closest ally, on decision making in Islamabad".

Within days of his becoming Prime Minister, Sharif sent the Pakistani air force to carry out airstrikes in Eastern Afghanistan targeting ISI-K, which is said to have links with the terroristic Pakistan Taliban - precisely the kind of action Imran Khan always resisted. The Afghans say this killed 45 people, including 20 children. □

Letter from India

While Boris Johnson was trying to persuade Modi to "buy British" rather than Russian, during his visit this April, he also posed with him alongside JCB diggers. But Modi was already making use of JCBs, having instructed his thugs to bulldoze the homes of Indian Muslims and the poor. This stirring up of communal tensions is a copy and paste of what happened when Trump visited in 2020. Meanwhile, of course Johnson was showering Modi with praise for leading "the world's largest democracy"!

On 2 April, at Karauli (Rajasthan) a rally organised by the BJP and its sister paramilitary and quasi-fascist organisations - the RSS, the VHP and the Bajrang Dal - deliberately stopped in a Muslim neighbourhood to provoke Muslims during Ramadan. On 7 April, in Sitapur (Uttar Pradesh) Hindu "holy man" Bajrang Muni who is close to the BJP and surrounded by police to protect him, openly threatened Muslim women outside a mosque with rape. On 10 April in Khargone (Madhya Pradesh) a mob armed with petrol bombs went on the rampage, burning Muslim homes. On 16 April in Jahangirpuri (Delhi) VHP thugs carrying saffron flags, swords and firearms, tried to raise a saffron flag (now a symbol of the Hindu right) on a mosque.

There were communal clashes in Patiala (Punjab), Jodhpur (Rajasthan), Vadodara (Gujarat), Amravati (Maharashtra)... And as usual, Modi gave his tacit support. Then, imitating the Israeli Defence Force, which routinely bulldozes the houses of suspected Palestinian protestors, the BJP bulldozed the houses of Muslims but

Johnson, Modi and the bulldozing of the poor



also the homes of Hindu poor, claiming their neighbourhoods were "illegal encroachments" on public land. And now the land will be handed over to property developers!

Workers' and small shopkeepers' neighbourhoods on Delhi's outskirts have been flattened. Never mind that India is full of "illegal encroachments", where the rich flout planning rules to build their palatial homes! And now that Covid is "over", according to the BJP Home Minister, the government is going ahead with the controversial Citizenship Amendment Act and National Register of Citizens which sparked such widespread protest when he tried to introduce them

in 2019. Promoted by Modi as a means to keep out "illegal immigrants", in reality these laws target India's poorest Muslims forcing them to "prove" their Indian citizenship when very few possess the necessary papers.

Since 2014, Modi has maintained a constant state of mobilisation of Hindu paramilitaries. Stoking communal tension is a tried and tested method of dividing and intimidating the poor when the government is in trouble and especially when the cost of living crisis could unite the sectional forces, like the farmers and youth which have recently staged such determined mobilisations. □

In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.