

# UK Prime Minister May to quit as Conservative leader June 7

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UK Prime Minister Theresa May's resignation announcement as leader of the Conservative Party, effective June 7, will unleash a vicious campaign to replace her. Whoever wins in July—current favourite Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Jeremy Hunt, Dominic Raab or someone now seen as less likely—will steer the government still further to the right.

This will not only place it on a collision course with the European Union—Johnson made his pitch for the party's hard-Brexit vote by declaring that the UK would leave the EU on October 31, with or without a deal. It signals a coming conflict with the working class.

When May delivered her farewell speech outside 10 Downing Street, the only tears shed were her own—in a nauseating display of thwarted ambition and self-pity.

She came to lead the country in 2016 as a hated figure and leaves it as a despised political failure.

As Britain's longest serving Home Secretary under David Cameron, she was adored by the party's most xenophobic right-wingers. She is associated with the promise to reduce net migration by two thirds and to create a “really hostile environment for illegal immigration.”

This involved refusing to accept an EU quota of refugees from war-zones, restricting the right of migrants to bring in their spouses and children and blatantly criminal acts against individual asylum seekers for which she faced the threat of fines and imprisonment for contempt of court in June 2012.

The most grotesque examples of her “hostile environment” policy was to commission a campaign involving lorries driving through immigrant areas with billboards warning, “Go home or face arrest.” Its legacy included the death of members of the Windrush Generation of Afro-Caribbean British citizens among more than 80 wrongly deported to the West Indies.

This made her an acceptable compromise leader, as a

supporter of remaining in the EU, after Cameron was forced to resign in July 2016 following the referendum vote to leave the EU.

The poison chalice she took up was to seek a “soft-Brexit”, involving continued tariff-free access to the vital Single European Market, when this involved compromises with Brussels that were unacceptable to the dominant Euro-sceptic Tory right and, from 2017, also her confidence and supply partners in the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

May's premiership was short-lived—less than three years. It would have been shorter still had May not been able to count on what has turned out to be her one political asset—Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the Labour Party and of Her Majesty's Opposition.

Corbyn had everything going for him that May did not. She was elected by 199 Tory MPs. He was elected party leader in 2015 by an overwhelming majority of hundreds of thousands of Labour members and supporters. In 2016, his right-wing MPs tried to depose him by a vote of no confidence, on the basis that he had not campaigned to stay in the EU with the necessary enthusiasm! He won again in September that year by a still larger majority.

In June 2017, a snap general election called by May was held. She hoped to strengthen her hand by exploiting the constant offensive by Labour's right-wing and the media against Corbyn. This ended in disaster, as Labour's vote increased massively. The Tories were reduced to a minority, reliant on 10 DUP MPs and with May even more surely a political hostage to her hard-Brexit critics and opponents.

Corbyn rescued May again and again. He did so by betraying the mandate of those who twice elected him to drive out the Blairites, break with their warmongering and take the fight to the hated Tory government. If May's period in office is a slow-motion train crash, Corbyn's is a series of ignominious retreats before his political

opponents, ceding everything without a fight, along with constant efforts to suppress the class struggle and keep social and political discontent confined to support for his own parliamentary manoeuvres.

Since May began the process of withdrawing from the EU in March 2017, she has unsuccessfully put the Brexit deal she negotiated with the EU before parliament on three occasions—including a defeat by the largest majority in history by a government in January. She faced a no confidence vote by her own MPs in December 2018 and a parliamentary vote of no confidence in January 2019 and has been living under an axe since her third Brexit deal defeat in March—after promising to step down as prime minister if her deal was passed, without success.

Corbyn's response to all of this was to spend his every waking moment trying to keep his own fractious party together—especially by a policy of “constructive ambiguity” on whether Labour would support the second referendum to overturn Brexit favoured by the Blairites. Even this did not stop seven Blairites from defecting under Chukka Umunna to align with a handful of pro-EU Tories in the misnamed “Change UK”.

More important still, Corbyn assumed the mantle of statesman and guarantor of the national interest, while Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell became his emissary to the City of London, promising that a Labour government would do the bidding of big business.

This reached its nadir, after Corbyn agreed to what became six long weeks of negotiations with May on securing a Brexit deal that could win majority support, when there was never any chance of such an outcome. Part of the deal was that Corbyn ended all calls for a general election.

The result, as always, was to exclude the working class from political life and give free rein to a government that was dead on its feet. The talks ended on May 16. Eight days later May was weeping on the steps of Number 10 Downing Street.

Even now, Corbyn refuses to do anything that could be interpreted as irresponsible by Britain's boardrooms and banks.

"Whoever becomes the new Conservative leader must let the people decide our country's future, through an immediate general election," he declared. This is a new definition of immediate! A general election only after two months in which the Tories have been allowed to regroup, and only then if this is acceptable to the new leader of the party.

May's resignation speech was a calculated insult,

beginning with her ludicrous claim to have “striven to make the United Kingdom a country that works not just for a privileged few, but for everyone.” May was “bringing an end to austerity” and helping “more people than ever [to] enjoy the security of a job” with her “decent, moderate and patriotic Conservative government.”

She even had the gall to cite her record on education, the National Health Service and in launching the inquiry into the Grenfell Tower inferno as a “search for the truth” even as the guilty continue to walk free.

Speaking for the families of the 72 who lost their lives, Grenfell United replied, “It's hard to think of a greater injustice in recent years than Grenfell.”

This week, UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty Philip Alston issued his final report comparing the UK to a giant Victorian workhouse—with close to 40 percent of children predicted to be living in poverty by 2021, one fifth of the population (14 million) living in poverty, over 1.5 million destitute and a further 2.5 million on incomes no more than 10 percent above the poverty line. The week also saw British Steel Limited going into liquidation, threatening 25,000 jobs in total; 1,000 jobs lost at Jamie Oliver's collapsed restaurant chain; and confirmation that Honda in Swindon will close in 2021 with 3,500 redundancies.

May's imminent downfall must spur on all those workers and young people who want to fight these attacks to reject the soporifics of Corbyn and his allies in the trade union bureaucracy, and wage an independent class struggle in alliance with their fellow workers throughout Europe and internationally for socialism.



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