

British Prime Minister Liz Truss resigns—a revolutionary crisis for British imperialism

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UK Prime Minister Liz Truss's resignation after just 45 days in office has brought the crisis of rule of the British ruling class to a new pitch of intensity. British politics has all the features of a revolutionary situation.

Truss is the shortest-serving prime minister in British history and has fallen as part of the wider breakdown of the Conservative government. By the end of next week, the UK will have had three prime ministers in just two months.

Her resignation followed chaotic scenes in the House of Commons Wednesday evening, with Tory MPs unsure whether a vote on fracking was being made a vote of confidence in the government. Deputy whip Craig Whittaker was seen shouting, "I am fucking furious, and I don't give a fuck any more." Chief Whip Wendy Morton reportedly resigned on the spot and was chased out of the room by Truss pleading with her to reconsider. Labour MPs claim some of their counterparts were being "manhandled" into voting with the government.

Just hours before, frothing right-wing Home Secretary Suella Braverman delivered a stinging letter of resignation framed as a leadership challenge, stating her "serious concerns about this government's commitment to honouring manifesto commitments."

Such open disarray in Britain's main capitalist party, after 12 years in power and still with a majority of 71 seats, is the result of the enormous international and internal pressures on British imperialism, amid a war with Russia threatening to go nuclear and an unprecedented collapse in living standards.

In different circumstances, a general election would have been called long ago to tamp down tensions in the ruling party or replace it and bring some sense of legitimacy to the reactionary parade in Parliament. But the ruling class is terrified that even so restricted and stage-managed an affair as a parliamentary election would potentially unleash mass protest and opposition.

Households are threatened with thousands of pounds a year in extra energy, housing and food costs, provoking strikes by hundreds of thousands of rail, post, telecoms, education and council workers.

The Tory party is desperate to avoid an election and is planning to replace Truss by another palace coup, more naked than even that which removed Boris Johnson. Candidates will need the support of 100 of their colleagues to get on the ballot, in the hope that a single winner can be put to Tory Party members to vote on electronically before next Friday.

This is not assured. Negotiations are ongoing to ensure that former Chancellor Rishi Sunak secures majority support, but this means Penny Mordaunt agreeing to stand aside, as new Chancellor Jeremy Hunt and Defence Secretary Ben Wallace have already indicated they will do. This would leave Sunak standing against a divided right represented by Truss's fellow ultra-low-tax free-marketeters Braverman and Kemi Badenoch. But in an extraordinary turn of events, Johnson is emerging as a favourite should he manage to go through to the membership vote.

The absence of Wallace and Hunt from the contest is the strongest indication of the political issues at stake, not just for British but also for US and world imperialism.

As Truss was facing the axe Wednesday, Wallace flew to the US for an emergency meeting at the Pentagon to give assurances of the UK's continuing role in NATO's war against Russia. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly described the discussions as the sort "which frankly you don't want to have over the telephone."

On the economic front Hunt is preparing a fiscal statement of savage spending cuts for October 31 to present to the global financial oligarchy which tanked the British economy in response to Truss's unfunded tax cuts in the September 23 mini-budget.

President Biden, when asked about any possible

negative economic impact from Truss's resignation, said any spillover would be "inconsequential". He stressed that she had been "a good partner on Russia and Ukraine and the British are going to solve their problems." A White House statement thanked Truss for her "partnership" in "holding Russia to account for its war on Ukraine" and pledged continued "close cooperation with the UK government."

None of this Machiavellian scheming would be possible without the ongoing suppression of the class struggle by the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party.

On Wednesday, the *Independent* newspaper reported that two million workers are set to strike or ballot in the next months—a movement that could bring down any government, let alone that which is presently rotting alive in Westminster.

Instead, only a fraction of the workers demanding strike action have been mobilised, spread out across different individual days of action for different disputes.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) is working in intimate collaboration with Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, who functions as the point-man for British and US imperialism during this raging crisis.

His call for a general election, now echoed by every other parliamentary party, is an offer for Labour to engineer a smooth transition to another government when this becomes unavoidable, epitomised by his "acceptance" that an election is only possible if Tory MPs decide to honour their "patriotic duty" and put "the nation" before their party.

Starmer's model is for a corporatist alliance between the government, the corporations and the unions of the kind under which US Democratic President Biden is imposing a brutal contract on railroad workers in the US and German SPD Chancellor Olaf Scholz is imposing brutal pay cuts on hundreds of thousands of chemical workers. The Labour leader told the TUC congress on the day of Truss's resignation that it must work with Labour and the employers in a "true collective agreement for the nation", including to protect Britain "from tyrants like Putin."

Starmer was telling the trade unions to prepare for a change of leadership by getting strikes off the table—using promises that things will get better under a Labour government—and to continue policing the working class as Labour implements an agenda of austerity and war.

A national government of both Labour and Tory ministers, justified by invoking the "national interest", remains a real possibility to avoid a general election if no

solution can be found within the Tory party.

Responding to Truss's resignation, Chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site* International Editorial Board David North tweeted, "The resignation of Liz Truss after only six weeks in office is a further confirmation of the development of a fundamental crisis of class rule in Britain. A revolutionary situation, as Marxists have explained, emerges when the ruling class can't rule in the old way.

"At this point, the ruling class is unable to rule at all. Its survival now depends on the ability of the Labour Party, led by the ultra Blairite Keir Starmer, and the apparatus of the trade unions to strangle the movement of the increasingly militant working class.

"The other essential element of a revolutionary crisis—that the working class can't live in the old way—certainly exists. The critical issue now is its intervention in the crisis. The demand for a general election must be directed toward calls for independent mass action."

Everything depends upon that intervention of the working class against the Tory and Labour conspirators.

Since the first palace coup against Johnson, the Socialist Equality Party has called for workers to fight for a general election held on their terms, through the intensification of the class struggle into a general strike.

The SEP would campaign in an election for rank-and-file committees to break the stranglehold of the union bureaucracy and put decision-making power where it belongs, on the factory floor. Above all, we will seek to bring into the open the policy of world war which does not feature in the factional conflicts of the ruling class because it is uniformly agreed on and because they fear its implications being broadly understood. We would use an election to build an international anti-war movement among British workers.



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