

UNITE AGAINST TERROR, RACISM AND WAR



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A wave of shock has followed yet another horrific terrorist attack. This time in the centre of London, yesterday's mowing down of people using a vehicle comes after atrocities using vehicles in Berlin and Nice during the last 8 months, and other appalling terrorist attacks in France and Brussels.

The Socialist Party has strongly condemned all of these attacks, and does so again on this occasion.

The attacker's choice of Westminster - and the fact that he ran towards Parliament - suggests anger against the establishment and government, but the victims were ordinary people, especially tourists viewing the Houses of Parliament.

People of ten different nationalities were indiscriminately hit. Three people plus the attacker died and seven are critically injured. In any case, whoever is targeted, acts of individual terror should always be opposed. They are not an effective means to struggle against the establishment.

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Trying to assure people that the attacker was most likely acting alone and not part of a set of attacks, Theresa May made a sanctimonious speech on 'resolve' to 'never waver' or be afraid.

Yet she heads a Tory government that is making people far more vulnerable when terrorism occurs. Huge cuts to London transport are inflicting the axing of many safety-critical staff. In addition fire stations have been closed, the ambulance service is over-stretched due to cuts, hospitals are under-staffed and there are threats to A&E departments. The government also wants to see the bosses of Southern Rail, Merseyrail and Northern Rail defeat the RMT union's strikes against the removal of safety-critical guards on trains.

Government hypocrisy

The Tories' hypocrisy knows no bounds. The last thing that the likes of May will acknowledge is any link between the devastation their policies have caused across the Middle East and the threat of terrorism in Britain. Little information has so far been released on the background of the attacker, but May called the attack "Islamist terrorism" and Islamic State (ISIS) has claimed responsibility.

It is unfortunately no surprise that an incident of this nature has again occurred. There have been few terror attacks in Britain since the terrible 7/7 London bombings in 2005, but the intelligence services say they have 'foiled' 12 plots in the last three years and they have called the likelihood of the threat "severe" for a long period.

Last November, MI5 head Andrew Parker stated "there will be terrorist attacks in this country" and noted that the 'tempo' of terrorist plots and attempts during the last three years was the highest in his 33

years at MI5.

ISIS in Syria and Iraq has made it known that it is encouraging the carrying out of attacks in Europe – this is one way it is trying to fight back while being squeezed by military onslaughts against it in Mosul and north Syria. It is a sign of its weakness, not strength, that it resorts to murderous individual acts. It doesn't seek to remove capitalism – rather it wants use its fascist type methods and individual terrorism to attack ordinary people and aid its aim of creating a capitalist or semi-feudal caliphate in the interests of its leaders.

Whether or not the perpetrators of atrocities like yesterday's are directly motivated by ISIS, British imperialism – along with US imperialism and other world powers – has created outrage across the Middle East and globally to its involvement in the slaughter of over 150,000 people in Iraq and Afghanistan. Those wars – and also in Yemen, Libya and parts of Pakistan – have generated would-be terrorists and Al-Qaida type groups across the globe.

The worst suffering by ordinary people from terrorist acts has been in those countries themselves, where regular suicide bombings have hit many hundreds of people in cities like Baghdad and Kabul.

Now the media in Britain is again asking how further attacks like yesterday's in Westminster can be stopped, but there will be no way of stopping them based on a continuation of the government's policies. The attacker was born in Britain – as were the 7/7 bombers. The police and intelligence services have no way of preventing all such attackers, through their methods of surveillance and 'anti-terrorism' laws.

Defend the right to protest

The Tories have already used past terrorist attacks to justify anti-democratic legis-

lation. But the 'anti-terrorism' laws of the year 2000 didn't stop 7/7, nor will more repressive legislation. The police had plenty of powers to arrest anyone planning or committing a crime before these laws were brought in.

Also, extra police powers of surveillance, restrictions on movement, etc, can also be used against trade unionists, anti-cuts campaigners, socialists and others who are opposing the government's pro-big business policies. They must be opposed.

Fight against racist scapegoating

For years right-wing politicians in the three main parliamentary parties have dangerously used rhetoric that has played into the hands of racists. Anti-immigrant talk came from leaders on both sides of the EU referendum debate. The Socialist Party's pro-working class standpoint, against division and racism and for Brexit on the basis of socialist internationalism, was not covered in the mainstream media.

Since the referendum, and the election of Trump, there has been an increase in racist attacks. Also it mustn't be forgotten that racist attacks increased six-fold in the weeks after 7/7; a similar outcome must be fought against by socialists and trade unionists following this new terrorist attack, by calling for workers' unity against all forms of racism and the far right.

This needs to include countering the far-right Britain First demonstration that has been called for 1st April.

All the racist, anti-democratic, pro-austerity and pro-war measures and policies of May's Tory government must be fought by the trade union movement with new vigour and a determined plan of action. The building of a mass movement of opposition can remove it from power - and lay the basis for reversing its policies that breed poverty, division and terrorism.