

Jobs massacre at Jaguar Land Rover confirmed



Overproduction not Brexit is to blame. But if there really are too many cars in the world, what are workers to do?

Only last April came the bombshell announcement that 1,000 jobs were to go at Jaguar Land Rover's Solihull plant, out of a workforce of 9,000. Then came the news, leaked in December by the Financial Times, that the company would announce further job cuts of up to 5,000 in January – a number that has since been revised down slightly to 4,500 – from a total British workforce of 40,000. Nor does the litany of disasters for JLR's workers end there, as it seems that even this is only the company's "short-term" plan ("Project Charge"), with more to come in the not-too-distant future ("Project Accelerate"). ([Jaguar Land Rover set to cut thousands of jobs in new year](#), Peter Campbell, Financial Times, 16 December 2018) The capitalist crisis continues to put the squeeze right across the [car industry](#), sparking the beginnings of a workers' revolt. Over at Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant in Cheshire, successive waves of redundancies have seen the workforce shrink from 1,900 to 1,100. In November, when a further 241 lay-offs were announced, workers responded with a mass walk-out. The crisis is one of [overproduction](#), occurring when capitalism produces far more things than can be bought by workers. Rather than producing the things which are needed, and making sure workers are able to access those things, it produces items for maximum profit. This drive for maximum profit also means that many processes are [automated](#) to be carried out by robots – a process which also puts many thousands out of work. Whilst JLR, owned by Indian giant Tata Motors, likes to blame the "demonisation of diesel" and "uncertainty" around [Brexit](#) for the company's collapsing sales, the fundamental cause is to be found in this anarchy of capitalist production. With markets glutted in the US and China, sales of British luxury cars like those produced by JLR and Bentley have been hit hard. Manufacturers try to beat their trade rivals by [shifting production](#) into countries with lower wages (like JLR's Slovakia operation) and slashing jobs at home. Car workers are right to resist all attempts to make them pay for a crisis that is not of their making and in essence has nothing to do with Brexit – despite all the protestations of monopoly capitalists to the contrary, hoping to throw dust in our eyes and distract us from the real enemy, capitalism. JLR's CEO Ralf Speth is wringing his

hands over Brexit, claiming it will cost the company £1.2bn, lead to tens of thousands of job losses and push JLR into diverting production into eastern Europe. But it is capitalism itself that has created this mess. What Speth and his fellow band of anti-Brexiters really fear is that an end to the free movement of labour and capital within the [European Union](#) might just make it a little harder for bosses to switch production or workers about from place to place to maximise profits, intensify exploitation, do down their rivals and dodge the overproduction bullet – all at the expense of workers' job security, pay and conditions. The 'cliff edge' they truly fear is the [global crisis](#) into which capitalism is careening. Until the means of production – factories, farms, etc – are socialised, and production is planned to meet people's needs, not to make private profit, workers' jobs will continue to be a hostage to fortune, prey to all the vagaries of capitalist 'free market' forces. In the short term, workers must demand that their factories are nationalised and kept going. If there really is no demand for the cars being produced, the factories should be transformed to produce things that people *do* need, and workers retrained to make them. And if we are still faced with the problem of 'lack of demand' (ie, workers not having enough money to pay for the things they need), then it is clear that the whole system needs to be transformed, not merely a few factories. What kind of insanity is it when the workers who produce all of society's superabundant wealth are [unable to share in that abundance](#) – are unable even to [feed their families](#) or keep the [roofs over their heads](#)? Until the means of production are socialised and planned production is driven by social need, not private profit, workers' jobs will continue to be prey to the vagaries of the market. Only by fighting for [socialism](#) can we win a future of secure jobs, full employment and advancing living standards.

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