

British history of revolutionary fervour



1381: In aftermath of Black Death, Britain faces corrupt ruling elite, who govern in name of 14-year-old King Richard II, super-rich merchant traders in City, and unpopular war with France

Peasant's Revolt:

Heavy-handed attempts to enforce poll tax – introduced to pay for war – trigger revolt. Rioters storm Tower of London, where government is hiding, execute Archbishop of Canterbury as well as Lord Chancellor. London's streets run with blood as rioters behead City merchants

Poll tax abolished

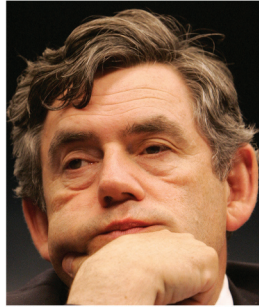


1843: Prime Minister Robert Peel inherits corrupt House of Commons, slump in world trade, four bad harvests in a row, and unpopular wars in China and Afghanistan

Corn Laws: Import tariffs supporting inflated British wheat prices – and profits of farmers – lead to high bread prices and fears of famine

Unrest: Mass poverty and reintroduction of income tax spark riots, two attempts on life of Queen Victoria and assassination of Peel's private secretary, Edward Drummond

Corn Laws repealed



2009: Prime Minister Gordon Brown tries to rescue his leadership amid public fury over MPs' expenses scandal, surging unemployment, global economic crisis, and unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan

Casualty of scandal:

Brown could face leadership challenge following expected Labour bloodbath in June's Euro elections. Polls suggest at least half of 646 MPs in House of Commons will be replaced at general election – due by June 2010 – as voters take revenge over Westminster corruption

Calls for honest MPs

Pictures: Richard II, Westminster Abbey; Robert Peel by Sir Thomas Lawrence; Gordon Brown, Associated Press