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Tories torn - bin them now

May's EU malaise reflects crisis for capitalist class

Fight for a socialist Brexit to bring the whole lot down

This brutal, broken Tory government is limping. May's premiership hangs by a thread.

Her party is locked in what could be the deepest crisis in its history. As workers gather outside parliament to protest against the public sector pay cap, it's clear that the time for the trade union movement to act is now.

The [uprising that took place on 8 June](#) - when millions defied the solemn warnings and sneering dismissals of the capitalist establishment by voting for an alternative to austerity - has dealt a potentially mortal blow to May, as well as the whole Tory regime.

Weakened, the prime minister now faces what is, from the point of view of Britain's capitalist class, a nightmare task. She is attempting to negotiate a deal on Brexit while simultaneously holding her party together. Achieving both aims is likely to prove impossible.

But while this situation is a disaster for the Tories and their super-rich friends, for our class it presents an opportunity. Faced with mass mobilisations of workers and young people, this government can crumble and fall.

Leadership

This means the leadership of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) must immediately break with its current policy of 'wait and see and hope for the best', and instead seize the initiative. It should start by calling a huge national demonstration. This could be used to build up to widespread, nationally coordinated strike action to break the pay cap.

Among working class people there is clearly appetite for action. This was demonstrated over the summer in the many disputes that broke out on a local level - among the [Birmingham bin workers](#), [Barts Trust hospital staff](#), and [BA cabin crew](#), for example. More recently, it has also been shown in the overwhelming vote to strike by postal workers - action currently being frustrated by an outrageous anti-union legal injunction.

If a lead was given, whether by the leadership of the trade union movement or by Jeremy Corbyn calling people to the streets, Britain could rapidly erupt in mass protest. A crisis for the Tories is a crisis for the class they represent - the super-rich 0.1%. But for working class people, it provides a fresh opportunity to build a movement to kick them out and to bring an end to the hated austerity agenda.

The malaise May's party faces is not really about the antics of Johnson or other Tory mega-egos. Its causes are far more fundamental. It is a result of the profound crisis facing the capitalist system on an international scale. But it is also a symptom of the specific crisis faced by British capitalism.

Four months ago, Theresa May stood on the steps of Downing Street to announce her intention to call a general election. In a speech brimming with hubris, she declared that through securing an (inevitably) increased majority, it would be possible to "remove the risk of uncertainty and instability [posed by Brexit] and continue to give the country the strong and stable leadership it demands."

In saying this, she unwittingly hinted at reality. May called the election because she was in an already weakened position. This was not a personal weakness as such. It was a weakened position for her party and

the capitalist class who it exists to represent.

Because the revolt of 8 June 2017 was in fact the second of two major electoral revolts that took place within a short space of time. The first came just under a year earlier in the form of [the vote to leave the European Union](#).

The Leave vote was not an endorsement of Johnson, Gove or Farage, or of their divisive and racist campaign. First and foremost it was an expression of raw class anger. It was, at bottom, a protest aimed at the austerity agenda, at the capitalist establishment and at the EU as an institution which fundamentally works in the interests of the small, rich few.

May has emerged from 'unscheduled' talks with president of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker on the Brexit deal looking more vulnerable than ever. There is a reason why, when asked how she would vote in an EU referendum were it held again today, she dodges the question. It is in the interests of British capitalism - of bankers, big business and the rich - that Britain remains within the EU, particularly within the single market and the customs union.

Yet May is being forced to face both ways. Every attempt she makes at a conciliatory approach to the EU can be seized upon by the so-called 'hard-brexiteers' in the Tory party. Meanwhile, the heads of capitalist governments around Europe, who make up the European Council and who appoint the European Commission, are anxious to ensure that there is no 'easy exit' for Britain - fearful of the potential for the project's unravelling.

Workers' concerns

Understandably, many working class people in Britain feel worried about the economic instability that could result from what's termed a 'hard Brexit' - not to mention the continued uncertainty over the future status of EU citizens living in the UK. But the reality is that Johnson, Gove, Juncker and May have no genuine concern for the lives and wellbeing of working class people, either in Britain or elsewhere.

The true face of the European Union has been shown in the last month, by their backing of Spain's right-wing government in its attempts to [brutally suppress the right of the Catalan people to self-determination](#). It was shown in 2015 when, as working class people in Greece voted overwhelmingly for an end to punishing austerity, the EU used all its strength to impose a crushing defeat on the Syriza government, whose leadership outrageously capitulated to their demands.

What kind of Brexit?

That's why the real debate must not be about a hard versus a soft Brexit, but a workers' versus a bosses' Brexit. During the election campaign, Corbyn correctly hinted at this, and gained a wide echo from working class people. But any attempt by the Labour leadership to correctly use the Tory divisions to hasten the end of the government must not miss the central point, that any 'deal' done by May (or any other representative of the capitalist class) will fundamentally be about protecting the interests of big business, at the expense of working class people.

The ruling class are increasingly looking to the Blairites - the representatives of the 1% within the Labour Party -

to exert pressure on the Labour leadership to soften their position on various issues, particularly those surrounding the Brexit negotiations. This is a symptom of the concern among the ruling class about their lack of reliable political representation, as well as their fear of a Corbyn-led government that could further awaken the appetites of working class people for radical change.

Rather than retreating under this pressure, Corbyn must instead stand up to the right, and outline the case for a socialist Brexit. This would be based on protecting the interests of working class people in Britain, whichever country they were born in, and on international solidarity with working class people fighting back across Europe and the rest of the world.

That would mean exiting all EU treaties that act against the interests of working class people. It would include, for example, abolishing all those rules which outlaw nationalisation and which allow for the super-exploitation of workers through agreements like the posted-workers directive.

It would mean being prepared to meet the blackmail of the capitalist class, whose threats of economic Armageddon are creating fear and confusion, with socialist measures. Being prepared to nationalise not just a few selected industries but the banks and the major monopolies that dominate the British economy.

This would pave the way for working class people to democratically plan production to meet the needs of everyone. It would provide the opportunity to use the vast wealth, currently concentrated in the hands of the tiny few, to provide healthcare, education, jobs and housing to all who need them. It would provide the opportunity to build a socialist society for the many, not the few. Such an approach would be popular not just in Britain, but across Europe, and could be a first step towards a socialist confederation of the continent as a whole.

Schools "can't go any further" - stop the cuts: set deficit budgets now

Nick Chaffey, Socialist Party Southern region

"With less and less money to run schools, we are suffering enormously. Cuts have been made but we can't go any further.

"That would directly impact the educational standards we are trying to achieve," explained Southampton headteacher and National Union of Teachers (NUT - now part of the National Education Union) member Liz Filer.

'Southampton Fair Funding for All Schools' brought teachers, students, TAs, heads and parents onto the streets on 14 October to protest against the growing crisis in Southampton schools. The action took place ahead of the national lobby of MPs at Westminster on 24 October, which the campaign has built for.

The schools crisis faces an added twist with further cuts under the new Tory funding formula. The Westminster lobby should rally teachers and parents to back a national schools strike to stop the cuts.

Speaking for Southampton NUT, Penny Burnett emphasised the crisis: "We have classes of 37 children locally!"

Ian Taylor from the National Association of Head Teachers warned against the government propaganda claiming increased funding. "That is because there are more children in the system than ever before, but there is not enough money."

Trashed

Sue Atkins, speaking for Southampton Socialist Party, said: "My granddaughter is four. Five years is a long time to wait for a general election. I'm not prepared to see her education trashed.

"If the Tories can find £1 billion for a bribe to the DUP, they can find the money for our schools.

"We are told the rich will up sticks and leave if we increase taxes and close tax loopholes. If you want to leave, that's fine by me. But you won't take your assets with you - we will keep them to serve the interests of the majority, not the few.

"We need to stand together in solidarity. That must include Labour councillors using their full powers, including licensed school budget deficits, to protect schools and education.

"If the council gave a lead to protect school budgets it would transform the situation and give confidence to other schools in the city who are being bullied to 'balance' their budgets.

"The council has sent a letter to the education secretary, but that needs to be backed up with action. This is a weak and divided government and we could push them back on this issue, by linking up with other councils and schools all over the country.

"We can win if we draw a line in the sand and say 'so far and no further' and fight for our children's education."

- National Education Union lobby of parliament: 24 October from 9.30am at Emmanuel Centre, Marsham Street, Westminster SW1P 3DW

Young people being strangled by debts

Take the wealth off the super-rich

No to the Tories' scapegoating of pensioners!

Jack Yarlett, Wirral Socialist Party

Over a third of young people are in debt - on average by £2,989 - [says the Money Advice Trust](#).

And this figure does not even include mortgages or our astronomical tuition fees! It also does not include young people borrowing money from our parents.

The head of the Financial Conduct Authority, Andrew Bailey, has admitted concerns about the alarming levels of debt young people aged 18 to 25 are facing.

And fearing more backlash from young people, Tory chancellor Philip Hammond is reportedly considering a tax cut for under-30s - funded by cuts to pension tax relief.

Over half of 18 to 24-year-olds express worries about money and debt, and more than a fifth admit to losing sleep over it, according to the Money Advice Trust study. One in ten has resorted to taking money from predatory payday loan companies - particularly young parents, the Young Women's Trust has found.

To add insult to injury, much of the establishment media likes to stereotype young people as causing our own problems by frivolously borrowing to pay for smartphones, 'useless' degrees and avocado toast. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Young people are going into debt to cover our cost of living, not spending on luxuries. This is no surprise in the new economy of low pay, zero-hour contracts and soaring rents.

This is a problem that will only grow worse as the government imposes the hated 'Universal Credit' welfare scheme, notorious for sometimes leaving claimants for more than a month without any income.

Meanwhile, Hammond's tax plan, like May's meagre 5,000-a-year housebuilding plan, does not come even close to what is needed.

And in unfairly attacking pensioners, it could well backfire - just like the Tories' infamous 'dementia tax' proposal. It's not retired workers, but super-rich bosses, who are to blame.

The Socialist Party demands:

- £10 an hour minimum wage now, with no exemptions

- Scrap zero-hour contracts - full-time hours for all who want them; flexibility on workers' terms, not the bosses'
 - Living benefits without compulsion
 - No attacks on pensioners - for a living pension for all
-

Tories scrap the NHS pay cap: now fight for real-terms pay rises!

Beth Webster, nurse, Cardiff

Public sector workers have scored another victory against the Tories: [the NHS pay cap will be scrapped](#).

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt confirmed the change on 10 October following a summer of protest headed by the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

But as with police and prison guards' cap removal last month, funding for the increase is likely to come from the existing NHS budget - and be below inflation: a real-terms pay cut. Hunt has alluded to a "productivity" deal, likely a euphemism for further cuts to fund the increases.

Meanwhile the NHS is heading towards another winter crisis. This January, the Red Cross even declared it a "humanitarian crisis" in England. The Autumn Statement is likely to exacerbate this with more cuts.

Vacancies

Hunt made his announcement on World Mental Health Day. In some areas, 20% of mental health nurse vacancies are unfilled, highlighting the consequences of capping pay as costs of living rise.

The NHS is plagued by staff retention issues. Workers are forced to either leave the service, or subsist on payday loans and foodbanks.

The Tories have been dogged by protests and even some strikes by NHS workers, such as the Barts Trust cleaners and domestics in east London and the RCN Westminster rally last month. Health workers will not tolerate Tory policies destroying care standards.

Popular anger, helped by the threat of possible industrial action by nurses, has forced this pitiful minority government into partial retreat. Labour has pledged to end the NHS pay cap and increase funding - but we cannot wait for Corbyn's rescue.

There is a danger that conservative union leaderships, such as in the RCN, will see Hunt's concession as 'job done'. This would be a mistake. Health unions previously demanded a 3.9% rise and must continue to fight for this.

The Trade Union Congress must act on its resolution to coordinate an offensive against all remaining pay caps - and if it won't, willing unions should.

Pay increases should be above inflation, and not funded from already meagre budgets. We need to build a mass movement, including strikes, to save our services and push the Tories out.

Obesity epidemic: end food market anarchy

Stephanie Hammond

At any given time nearly a billion people on the planet are hungry, and a third are malnourished. And yet a new report says the growing obesity crisis is set to [cost \\$1.2 trillion a year worldwide from 2025](#).

Why is it that when so many workers and poor are going hungry, so many others of us are likely to suffer from obesity?

The research, conducted by the World Obesity Day organisation, found the US is likely to face the biggest health bill - from \$325 billion a year in 2014 to \$555 billion in 2020. That would factor in at \$4.2 trillion over the next eight years.

Meanwhile the cost of treating obese people in Britain could reach as much as \$247 billion.

The human cost of obesity-related illnesses like heart disease and diabetes is much more difficult to quantify. It will be felt most of all by those who can just about afford to pay for essentials, including food, especially with a cash-strapped NHS.

Blame

The establishment media often points the blame at working people.

But if it is the problem of individuals, why is the crisis set to become an epidemic worldwide? If the problem is simply 'awareness', why is it getting worse?

The fact is that the problem is systemic, and bound up with inequality and the profit system.

Good quality ingredients and the time to prepare them - with artificially inflated prices, combined with stagnation at best in real wages - are out of reach for many people. At the same time, the number of families depending on tinned meals from foodbanks has sharply risen.

There is enough food produced globally not only to feed everybody, but to feed everybody well. The irrational capitalist system throws away millions of tons of food every day, and with it deprives billions of human beings of the basic requirements for life.

The Socialist Party says that instead, production and distribution should be collectively owned and democratically planned. Then decent quality food can be produced sustainably, to ensure no one goes hungry again.

What we saw

Depressing yearly student loan statement - paid off £106 this year, but after interest total amount owed only gone down by £25.

Got the loan in 2001 for about £6,000. As you can see, after eleven years of almost continuous full-time work, I've not made a dent - as now owe more than that!

For my loan you only start paying it off when you earn over £18,000. So in my current job I won't be paying off any at all as I won't earn enough.

Many people will never pay back these loans. Scrap tuition fees and cancel student debts.

Amelia Bartrip, Waltham Forest Socialist Party

Workers' anger increases after Royal Mail bosses block strike - back postal workers

A Royal Mail worker

"The public has a right to be protected from unsupported disruption being caused by a small proportion of union members and that's exactly what the Trade Union Act will do." That was [according to Tory business minister Margot James](#) speaking on the introduction of the Trade Union Act 2016.

But the true nature of the legislation was thrust into the open on 12 October when the judiciary came to the rescue of Royal Mail bosses in defying a democratic strike ballot result.

It was the first national ballot for strike action since the act's introduction. 72,877 Communication Workers Union (CWU) members voted to fight back against Royal Mail's attack on their pension rights and refusal to engage seriously over pay, working hours, future job security and the need to improve the service.

Those members would surely be forgiven for expecting that an 89.1% yes vote, on a 73% turnout, is no "small proportion", especially given that it smashed through the thresholds outlined in the Trade Union Act.

But the Royal Court of Justice ruled in favour of Royal Mail's claim that the full 'external mediation process' hadn't been exhausted, despite around 18 months of negotiations and the company having already informed workers about the changes to pensions.

Plans for a 48-hour strike from 19 October have been ["postponed"](#) with the union forced to enter mediation with the company.

The company's motivation - far from wanting to meaningfully engage in mediation - was revealed by a press release stating: "We expect the process to take close to Christmas to be completed, and maybe longer."

Rights

It is now evident that the thresholds in the act are not there to 'protect' the public but are another way of removing workers' right to strike.

And this result shows that bosses can then also rely on the judiciary to bail them out, should the thresholds be met in ballot results.

The anger already felt by members against the actions of the company has been added to by this court decision. Unofficial walkouts are possible and these must be supported by the union leadership.

This is an attack on all workers' right to strike and take action. Unions must recognise the implications of the new trade union laws. Members must pressure their leaders to create mass resistance, demanding TUC-organised support including solidarity action if necessary.

It is important that we fight this weak Tory government. These archaic anti-union laws can be put into the dustbin of history and Royal Mail can be placed into democratic public ownership for the benefit of workers and society.

PCS ballots members to send message to government: scrap the pay cap

The civil servants' union PCS is stepping up its pay campaign by holding a consultative ballot, timed to coincide with the autumn budget.

PCS assistant general secretary Chris Baugh says: "The PCS pay ballot is an unequivocal message to the government that not only do our members deserve a pay rise but they've had enough of subsidising public service cuts. The average pay of a civil servant has fallen by 20% since 2010.

"We are stepping up our action to end the pay cut as part of a fully funded pay settlement - not taken from other areas of public sector funding - and as a major civil service trade union for the restoration of national pay bargaining on behalf of all our members.

"This resolve runs throughout the public sector and any attempts to play one off against the other will only serve to strengthen this and the potential of coordinated action in the new year."

The decision to ballot follows the union's correspondence to the prime minister after the general election demanding an immediate end to the 1% cap.

Damian Green, minister for the cabinet office, in a complacent and dismissive response to the union, claimed that "the civil service offers an exceptional package of benefits which are among the best available". Despite 120,000 jobs cut, there is a "trade-off" between pay and jobs, he added.

PCS wants to send a strong, clear and united message to the government, to scrap the pay cap and fund inflation-proofing pay increases. PCS is demanding a rise of 5% or £1,200, whichever is greater.

Ballot

The ballot consists of two questions:

- Do you agree that the pay cap should be scrapped; and that funds should be made available to provide you with an above-inflation pay rise?
- If the government refuses to scrap the pay cap, are you prepared to take part in industrial action?

PCS is urging members to vote Yes to both. [The ballot ends on 6 November](#).

Nationalise to save jobs at BAE Systems

Becci Heagney, North West Socialist Party organiser

Arms manufacturer BAE Systems has announced that up to 2,000 jobs will be cut in locations across the UK. These job cuts will have a devastating effect on the lives of workers losing their livelihood but will also have a wider impact on the local economy.

BAE has said that the job cuts are necessary to "accelerate our evolution to a more streamlined, de-layered organisation, with a sharper competitive edge and a renewed focus on technology".

This means that workers are thrown on the scrap heap while profits for the bosses and dividends for the shareholders are protected! BAE increased its profits by 10% in 2015-16 [to £1.7 billion a year \(before tax\)](#).

'Northern Powerhouse'

The government should step in to nationalise BAE systems to defend jobs. On the one hand, the Tories promise investment in manufacturing and skilled jobs, particularly outside of London as part of the 'Northern Powerhouse'.

But on the other, they are willing to stand by and watch thousands of jobs disappear.

Tory Business Minister Claire Perry said: "I think it is really important that if we want to have a globally competitive, highly efficient bastion of success in this vital industry that we do allow the company to go through its management processes". Jobs and workers' livelihoods are again sacrificed in the interest of 'competition'.

This government is incredibly weak. Theresa May came out of the general election with a reduced majority and no mandate for her policies.

The Tories cannot agree on what kind of Brexit they want. The Socialist Party supports fighting for a Brexit that will defend jobs and workers' rights, as well as the right for migrant workers to remain. If action is taken now, this government can be kicked out!

A Corbyn-led government, which is a real possibility in the near future, could help to provide a solution. As part of a mass campaign by trade unions organised in companies like BAE Systems, the government could move to nationalise the company, defend jobs and look at a way of using the skills workers have in socially useful jobs, instead of manufacturing weapons that are sent to be used in dictatorships.

The Socialist Party opposes fighter jets, like the Typhoon jet manufactured in Lancashire, being sold to countries like Saudi Arabia to be used in bombing innocent civilians in Yemen.

But it is not the workers involved in the production who should be made to suffer either. That's why, as part of a socialist plan of production, people could be put to work on manufacturing and engineering items that actually benefit society.

Alternative

For example, in the 1970s [Lucas Aerospace workers drew up a plan of production](#) which included producing kidney dialysis machines and hybrid petrol-electric cars. Workers in BAE should go through the same process and democratically draw up an alternative plan.

We give our full support to the unions fighting these job losses. The company is stating that there will be no compulsory redundancies, but it seems unlikely that they will be able to cut so many jobs purely through voluntary ones. A mass campaign of all the sites affected should be launched with protests and strike action to defend jobs.

Striking back against the sackers' charter at Leeds University

Iain Dalton, Leeds Socialist Party

Across 16 separate picket lines with over 100 strikers and supporters attending a rally, University and College Union members gave their response to management's provocative [attempts to amend Leeds University's charter](#) to remove protections from dismissal.

The dispute revolves around changes such as introducing a catch-all dismissal criteria as well as removal of medical and legal independent specialists on some panels.

Management

On the eve of the strike, university management sent out a communication which denied that such changes would impact on academic freedoms. They argued that this would be secured by an academic representative of the university executive group who would adjudicate whether this had been infringed!

Local Socialist Party members have been working hard to mobilise support for the strike from local union branches and among students at the university.

In particular, Socialist Students at Leeds University has spent the last few weeks organising solidarity with the strike. Our leaflets explained why students should support the strike and appealed for other groups to take solidarity photos. We also held a meeting with local UCU president Vicky Blake speaking and toured all the picket lines on the first day of the strike.

UCU has declared this a dispute of national significance, because if this is not stopped at Leeds, then similar practices could rapidly spread across the whole of the university sector.

This is the latest struggle in the battle against the marketisation of education, and the Socialist Party and Socialist Students will be backing UCU members locally 100%. We'll be back on the picket lines for the remaining days of this strike and continue campaigning against this attack on university staff.

North London hospital workers fight cuts and job losses

Paul Kershaw, North London Socialist Party

Porters and domestics - members of the GMB union - at the North Middlesex hospital, facing the threat of redundancies and pay cuts, organised a spirited protest with a barbecue outside the hospital on 12 October.

Following the takeover of their service by profit-hungry contractor Medirest (healthcare division of the Compass group) in June, the firm's 'efficiency measures' include reducing the number of porters from 71 to 61 and cutting wages by £1,000 a year.

Workers look to the recent example of the ground-breaking strikes of porters, domestics and other low paid workers at the Barts hospital trust, and they have been joining the union.

They point out that patients will be left with fewer porters to assist them: "We know that patients can wait a long time for a porter when we are busy, but how can reducing our numbers say that this will not happen in the future? I have three young children and cannot afford to lose £1,000 a year from my wages," said a union member.

Who can? But, the corporate giant now seeks to make more profit by reducing pay and workers' much-needed breaks.

Protesters gave an indication of the massive support that hospital workers would get for industrial action in defence of jobs, conditions and services.

Local councils should call in the management of the crisis-ridden health trust to question their failure to ensure that Medirest behaves responsibly. Moreover, all outsourced services should be brought back in-house with workers receiving decent pay and full workplace benefits.

The North Middlesex chief executive, Libby McManus, was forced to resign in September following reported concerns over poor performance.

Local councils and the labour movement must demand that the trust gets a grip and staffs services properly through the winter.

Unite local government sector plans strike ballot

A Unite national meeting for delegates representing workers in local government unanimously voted for a motion proposed by Socialist Party member Danny Hoggan from Greenwich calling on the union to ballot all members in local government on taking industrial action to achieve a 5% pay claim.

Local government trade unions have lodged a national claim for 5% - but so far have done nothing effective to win it. Instead, nationally all is on hold awaiting a response from the employers.

There are, of course, individual exceptions, such as the magnificent [bin workers in Birmingham](#). In London, the region is running a campaign with the aim of coordinating action among members working for the huge number of contractors who now run council services.

The campaign involves lodging a mirror 5% claim with employers such as Greenwich Leisure Limited and others. Workers employed by OCS/Babcock to clean schools under a Hackney council contract have already agreed to ballot for strike action after the employer refused to consider the claim.

What this shows is just how easy it really is to coordinate a campaign across different employers and different sectors. The motion highlighted how the Tories are trying to divide workers by offering pay rises to the emergency services while still attacking workers in local government. This makes a joint campaign all the more vital.

The majority of Labour Party councillors have been silent on the issue. Ending the pay cap would need to be fully resourced and not paid for by cuts to jobs and services. A resolution to be heard at Greenwich council is calling on the chancellor to provide adequate funding, but apart from sending a letter, proposes no further action!

Replicate

At the local government meeting, the example of the CWU gaining a strong majority on a high turnout for industrial action did not go unnoticed by delegates. The work being undertaken by the PCS, which is holding a consultative ballot over the pay cap, can be replicated across the public sector unions.

The TUC rally in central London on 17 October, while welcome, isn't enough - a national weekend demonstration combined with coordinated strike action across the public sector is the way to really break the pay cap. It is also welcome that Len McCluskey has stated that Unite would support strike action even if it doesn't meet the threshold set by the draconian Trade Union Act.

In Greenwich, Unite is lobbying the full council meeting on 18 October to send a message to the Labour-dominated council. This should be replicated up and down the country.

Salford Unison condemns pay cuts

Becci Heagney

Within one week, Labour controlled Salford city council announced an increase in wages for some of the lowest paid care workers and also made a decision to cut the pay and some jobs of those working in Regulatory Services.

As part of its 'Transformation Programme' to digitalise the service, some workers will lose up to £6,521 a year through downbanding and 14 full-time equivalent posts are at risk.

A lobby (pictured above) was organised by Salford City Unison outside the council's cabinet meeting but the councillors approved the proposal.

Steve North, Unison branch secretary, said: "Union members are really disappointed with this decision. We have spent the last nine months explaining to Salford council why these cuts will impact not only on staff, but also on the delivery of services that are critical to keeping people safe in Salford.

"City mayor Paul Dennett is a Corbyn supporter and I don't think he will relish making this cut. Ultimately though good intentions don't pay bills or keep people safe."

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Russia, October 1917: When workers took power

Hannah Sell, Socialist Party deputy general secretary

With monotonous predictability the centenary of the Russian revolution has led to an outpouring of bile - not aimed in the main at the 'acceptable' February revolution - but at October. A cacophony of slander is attempting to drown out the real history of the October revolution.

This is no accident. Worldwide the capitalists are losing their ability to rule. Events are increasingly spiralling out of their control as the pent-up anger of the masses begins to express itself.

When Mark Carney, governor of the Bank of England, starts to warn about coming revolts [because the "frustrated and frightened" are "becoming disillusioned with capitalism."](#) it shows that the most thinking sections of the ruling class are beginning to fear revolution.

October 1917, when the working class, led by the Bolshevik Party, successfully took power and began to establish real workers' democracy, is the greatest event in human history to date. For the capitalist class it is vital that the lessons of it are buried.

They scored an ideological victory when Stalinism collapsed a quarter of a century ago. American philosopher Francis Fukuyama put it bluntly in 1989: "What we are witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War [the post-1945 conflict between US imperialism and the Soviet Union] but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of man's ideological evolution and the universalism of Western liberal democracy."

Now, decades later - amid war, economic crisis, and rising populist movements - Fukuyama has long since changed his tune.

At the time, however, it was seriously argued, and not just by him, that capitalism would guarantee a future of ever increasing democracy, stability and wealth for the majority.

Even then the capitalist commentators felt the need to bury the real history of the Russian revolution, endlessly peddling the lie that its degeneration into brutal dictatorship was inevitable.

Today, however, when capitalism so clearly means austerity for the majority, there is a growing interest in socialist ideas, and a growing fear among the capitalist elite that their rule could once again be threatened.

Opportunities

In the last 100 years there have been many opportunities for the working class to follow the path of the Russian workers in 1917. Contrary to the ideologues of capitalism, these have not only taken place in economically undeveloped societies.

In the revolutionary wave that swept Europe in the aftermath of 1917, it was [the mighty German working class that had the greatest opportunity](#) to take power.

[In 1968, in France, there was a general strike of ten million workers](#), the greatest in history. They occupied the factories and moved in the direction of socialism but were blocked by the leaders of their own organisations.

[In the Portuguese revolution of 1974](#), the capitalist state disintegrated.

In these and other cases, revolutionary movements developed in economically 'advanced' capitalist countries.

Why did the working class succeed in taking the opportunity which existed in Russia in October 1917, but not the many others that followed it? The biggest difference was the existence of a Bolshevik-type party.

Revolution cannot be called into being by any party, but unfolds when the masses can find no other way out and so burst onto the scene of history.

This happened [in Russia in February 1917](#). Tsarism was overthrown by a heroic movement of the workers and soldiers. However, they were not yet conscious of their own power and so allowed the capitalist class to step into the political vacuum.

The revolution then developed through nine months of advance and retreat, during which the working class tested all parties. The 'July Days' prepared the ground for the counterrevolution's offensive, with its brutal hounding of the Bolsheviks in the 'month of the great slander'.

United front

The counterrevolution came when the tsarist General Kornilov attempted, under the cover of the Kerensky government coalition, to drown the revolution in blood with a march on Petrograd. He was defeated by the most effective 'united front' in history to date.

A united front is when different workers' organisations - reformist and revolutionary - take part in a common struggle, but with full independence and the right to criticise.

Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the revolution with Lenin, summed it up as "march separately, strike together". In this instance Kerensky had collaborated with Kornilov's plans when he imagined that the revolting workers would be put down - but his provisional government, which had come to power on their backs, would remain in place.

But to secure its rule tsarism required a return to brutal dictatorship including the crushing of the provisional government. The government was suspended in mid-air as the masses themselves smashed Kornilov's coup, under the leadership of the Bolsheviks, some of whom, including Trotsky, were released from jail to defend Petrograd.

This was a key moment in the growing and increasingly implacable support of the masses for the Bolshevik Party. Testing them in action they were discovering them to be the only party that genuinely represented their interests.

One soldier in the Moscow garrison said: "After the attempt of Kornilov, all the troops acquired the Bolshevik colour... All were struck by the way in which the statement [of the Bolsheviks] came true... that General Kornilov would soon be at the gates of Petrograd."

Growth

The Bolsheviks grew massively in August and September. The masses "drink up the Bolshevik slogans as naturally as they breathe air". The Petrograd garrison was 90% in favour of the Bolsheviks, in some detachments over 95%. In the factory and shop committees, the same process was underway. At the beginning of the revolution in February, the Bolsheviks were a tiny minority.

At that stage, Lenin argued: "We must base ourselves only upon the consciousness of the masses. Even if it is necessary to remain in a minority, so be it... We will carry on the work of criticism in order to free the masses from deceit. Our line will prove right. All the oppressed will come to us. They have no other way out." This was what happened following the defeat of Kornilov.

The growing support of the working class and soldiers for the Bolsheviks was, in essence, because they were the only party which could deliver 'peace, bread and land,' the demands of the revolution.

All the others, unwilling to break with capitalism, had no possibility of offering more than warm words. The working class discovered this in the course of the nine months of the revolution.

Contrary to the belief of some today who rightly want to see a revolution and imagine that this will be achieved by appearing as 'radical' as possible at every stage, the Bolsheviks prioritised patiently explaining their ideas, confident that they would win the working class on the basis of experience.

Lenin's pamphlet 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It,' published on the eve of the revolution in October 1917, takes exactly that approach.

It patiently explains that the only way out of the nightmare facing Russia is a series of measures: nationalisation of the banks, workers' control, opening company books to inspections of workers' and peasants' committees, the abolition of business secrets and others - and that the working class is the only force capable of implementing this programme.

Revolutions are always a process, rather than a single act, developing over months or more commonly years. Events in the Russian revolution were exceptionally compressed because of the urgency of ending the horror of World War One.

While the tempo was exceptional, the same processes take place in all revolutions. All ultimately arrive at decisive moments when power is posed.

If the oppressed masses do not seize the opportunity then a period of confusion and demoralisation inevitably occurs which reactionary forces take advantage of to crush the revolution.

There is no doubt that, had the working class - led by the Bolsheviks - not taken the power in 1917, there would have been a new Kornilov and the imposition of a brutal dictatorship, not the idyllic capitalist democracy which is now imagined by establishment historians.

It was clear in the autumn of 1917 that the working class, concentrated in massive factories, could no longer live with things as they were. Not only the working class; 77% of the peasant districts were in revolt as the demands for land became deafening.

The existence of such conditions does not, however, automatically lead to the working class taking power. Many times, before and since, the opportunity has been missed as a result of inadequate leadership.

Timing

A revolutionary period is one where events are extremely concentrated. As Friedrich Engels pointed out, there can be times in history where 20 years is like one day, and then there can be one day where the events of 20 years are concentrated.

Driven into hiding in Finland by the murder threats of the July days, Lenin was writing to the Bolsheviks urging them to lead the revolution because the fate of Russia could be decided in two or three days.

In fact, the possibility of the working class and poor peasantry taking power lasted longer than this - but it would not have existed for many more weeks if the revolution had not taken place successfully.

Immediately before the October revolution, workers in Petrograd and other cities were feeling frustrated, starting to fear that maybe the Bolsheviks were after all the same as the others and would dither and refuse to take power.

Fearful of missing the opportunity, and of the degeneration of the soviets under Menshevik and 'Social Revolutionary' leadership, Lenin urged the Bolshevik Party to take power, basing itself on the factory committees, which at that time more closely than the soviets reflected the mood of the working class.

Trotsky, however, on the ground in Petrograd, was more aware of the huge changes being wrought in the soviets under the impact of events. The key Petrograd Soviet had swung dramatically in favour of the Bolsheviks, electing Trotsky as its chair in September.

Kerensky's government was preparing to move the most revolutionary battalions of soldiers out of Petrograd, obviously in preparation for a military attempt to quell 'Bolshevik' Petrograd. In response to this the Petrograd Soviet organised a Military Revolutionary Committee to defend the gains of the revolution.

This body carried through the October insurrection. The revolution was carried out on the basis of the most democratic organisations, the soviets. It established a highly democratic workers' state.

This was only possible, however, because of the existence of the 'subjective factor' - the Bolshevik Party. Today, understandably, given the record of the Stalinist dictatorships, and the savage attacks on the working class implemented by all the establishment parties, there is widespread scepticism towards parties and political organisations.

Nonetheless, as the two mass surges to elect and re-elect Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party show, this can be overcome when workers and young people see a real possibility of change.

The Russian revolution demonstrated that a vital prerequisite to a successful revolution is a party of a completely different type - a mass democratic party, with a far-sighted revolutionary leadership, based on and democratically controlled by the politically aware workers.

Democracy

The revolution brought into being a state that was far more democratic than the most 'democratic' capitalist country. Lenin drew the contrast as follows: "The Soviet government is the first in the world (or strictly speaking, the second, because the Paris Commune [1871] began to do the same thing) to enlist the people, specifically the exploited people, in the work of administration.

"The working people are barred from participation in bourgeois [capitalist] parliaments (they never decide important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realise perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions alien to them, instruments for the oppression of the workers by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of the exploiting minority".

This young, democratic workers' state achieved an enormous amount. It degenerated, not because of any inherent weakness in Marxism, but because of its isolation. From the beginning the Bolsheviks had seen the Russian revolution as the first step in a European and world revolution.

They knew that socialism could never be achieved in one country, particularly one as economically poor and backward as Russia. There were revolutions and mass upheavals including in Germany in 1918, and Hungary in 1919, which, if they had possessed a leadership like the Bolsheviks, would have completely transformed the situation in Europe and the world, and therefore the history of the twentieth century.

Instead the young workers' state was left alone faced with civil war, as the dispossessed capitalists and landlords collaborated with 21 armies of imperialism to try and crush the revolution. They failed to do so above all because of the huge international workers' solidarity with the Soviet Union.

Today

Today, more than a quarter of a century after the Soviet Union - which had degenerated into a brutal dictatorship - finally collapsed, there are many lessons to be learnt from the mighty October revolution. Once again we are seeing the working class begin to look for an alternative to the rotten capitalist system. We've seen glimpses of its power - such as in the Arab revolutions of 2011 which overthrew four brutal dictatorships.

In the defeat of this first new wave of revolutions we also see that the need to strive towards building mass revolutionary parties worldwide, linking together in an international, is crucial to the struggle for socialism in the 21st century.

Timeline

- 1905 revolution The 'dress rehearsal' for 1917.
- 1912 The Bolsheviks became a separate revolutionary party in contradistinction to the reformist Mensheviks.
- 1914 World War One. Inter-imperialist rivalries spill over into armed military conflict in Europe. Tsarist Russia links up with British and French imperialism and against German imperialism and its allies. Mass slaughter of troops and widespread suffering of civilians.
- 23 February 1917 On International Women's Day (8 March in the Gregorian calendar), low-paid women textile workers take to the streets of Petrograd demanding bread - later joined by other factory workers. Spontaneously, the February revolution begins.
- 27-28 Troops mutiny against the tsar. Petrograd and Moscow soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies formed.
- 3 March Tsar Nicholas II abdicates. The Provisional Government is inaugurated headed by Prince Lvov.
- 5 The Bolsheviks' paper, Pravda (Truth), is published in Russia for the first time since it was banned in July 1914.
- 3 April Lenin, Zinoviev and other Bolsheviks arrive from exile at Finland Station, Petrograd, to a huge welcome. Lenin shocks old guard Bolshevik leadership by putting forward his 'April Theses' denouncing the capitalist Provisional Government and calling for a workers-led socialist revolution. Initially in a minority, Lenin wins round Bolshevik party.
- 24-29 An all-Russia Bolshevik Party conference overwhelmingly approves the transfer of power to the soviets.
- 17 May Trotsky returns to Russia after being imprisoned by British government. In agreement with Lenin, he campaigns to win over the Mezhrailonsky (the Inter-District Organisation of which Trotsky is a leader) to join the Bolsheviks.
- 3 June The first All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies begins in Petrograd - dominated by the Social Revolutionaries (SRs) and Mensheviks who support the Provisional Government, with the Bolsheviks third strongest.
- 18 Attempt by the Mensheviks and SRs to turn the masses against Bolsheviks in a demo backfires. Up to 500,000 march in Petrograd demanding "all power to the soviets!" and "down with the (war) offensive!"
- 2 July The Kadets (Constitutional Democrats, the main capitalist party) withdraw from the Provisional government adding to the political instability.
- 3-5 The July Days. Soldiers, sailors and workers in Petrograd intend to stage an armed demonstration at the failure of the provisional government to deliver bread, peace and land - calling on the Petrograd Soviet to take power. Their demands, however, are in advance of the rest of Russia. The Bolsheviks and Mezhrailonsky meet to discuss the fraught situation: whether to try to get the protest called off, or to lead it to minimise the potential long-term damage to the movement. In consultation with workers and soldiers, the latter course of action is agreed.
- 4 July 500,000 demonstrate in Petrograd. The government launches a brutal crackdown, with 400 casualties in the capital. The printing presses of the Bolshevik paper Pravda are destroyed, the Bolshevik HQ seized and Lenin forced into hiding. Lenin, Zinoviev and Alexandra Kollontai, among others, are indicted for state treason. The same laws are used to arrest Trotsky on 23 July.
- 24 Kerensky, now prime minister and war minister, forms a new coalition.
- 26 July to 3 August The 6th congress of the Bolshevik party takes place. It agrees to fuse with the Mezhrailonsky.
- 27 Reactionary general Kornilov moves troops near to Petrograd in an attempted coup, aided by British army personnel and vehicles.
- 27-30 Under the guidance of the Bolsheviks - even though they are in a minority - the Military Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd organises the defence of factories and workers' districts. 40,000 'Red Guards' are recruited. Rail workers rip up track or re-route Kornilov's troop trains. Garrisons mutiny at Vyborg and Kronstadt. Kornilov is routed.
- 31 The Petrograd Soviet votes for the transfer of power to the working class by an overwhelming majority.
- 4 September Trotsky is released from Kresty prison.
- 11 The Moscow Soviet unanimously condemns the state repression of the Bolsheviks. The Black Sea Fleet adopts the slogan "power to the soviets," as do 23 regiments of the 12th Army.

- 24 Kerensky forms the third coalition government, including ten Menshevik and SR ministers.
 - 25 Trotsky elected chair of the Petrograd Soviet.
 - 10 October The Bolshevik Central Committee agrees to prepare for armed insurrection to overthrow capitalist regime and transfer power to soviets. Zinoviev and Kamenev vote against and later publicly leak plans. Soviets of workers, soldiers and sailors throughout Russia rally to transfer of power. Key military garrisons back Bolsheviks.
 - 24-26 October. Trotsky and the Military Revolutionary Committee organise taking key sites in Petrograd and capture the Winter Palace, the seat of Kerensky's regime. No bloodshed, indicating overwhelming support for revolution.
 - 25 Overwhelming majority of delegates to second All-Russia Congress of Soviets endorses transfer of power to the soviets.
 - 26 Soviet government is inaugurated with Lenin chair of people's commissars. Fighting in Moscow as counter-revolutionaries are defeated. Soviet power begins to be established throughout Russia.
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October 1917 reviews: 'More bright than any heaven'

The October revolution showed countless millions that workers have the power to stop exploitation and oppression. It's no surprise these events inspired marvellous documentary and artistic works. The Socialist revisits some of the classic accounts of 1917 - and comments on some more recent efforts to smear it...

Non-fiction: Ten Days That Shook the World

Inspirational platform for revolution's nameless voices

Ian Pattison

Leon Trotsky said John Reed "did not miss one of the dramatic episodes of the revolution" - he was someone who "knew how to see and hear." Reed's 1919 book 'Ten Days That Shook the World' does not disappoint. It is a superb read.

The American journalist gives a fantastic on-the-ground account of revolutionary Russia immediately before and after the Bolshevik-led soviets overthrew capitalism across the land. He went halfway around the world to report on the unfolding revolution.

Reed was caught up in the revolution, and supported it. How could he not?

He remembers "bumping at top speed down the Suvorovsky Prospect, swaying from side to side. One man tore the wrapping from a bundle and began to hurl handfuls of papers into the air. We imitated him, plunging down through the dark street with a tail of white papers floating and eddying out behind."

"I picked up a copy of the paper, and under a fleeting streetlight read: To the citizens of Russia! Long live the revolution of workmen, soldiers and peasants!"

Reed's socialist loyalties put him in danger. On trying to enter Petrograd after siding with the revolution, he is challenged by a pro-capitalist colonel.

"We showed our Bolshevik papers... 'Oh dear no.' He smiled. 'We are holding the city for Kerensky.' Our hearts sank, for our passes stated that we were revolutionary to the core."

Ten Days gives a platform to the myriad nameless voices that had swung behind the revolution.

Even "the waiters and hotel servants were organised, and refused tips. On the walls of restaurants they put up signs which read, 'No tips taken here' or, 'Just because a man has to make his living waiting on tables is no reason to insult him by offering him a tip!'"

He recalls a crowd of revolutionary sailors' run-in with the rail union, the Vikzhel, led by the right. "A member of the Vikzhel was pleading with them. 'Comrades, we cannot carry you to Moscow. We are neutral. We do not carry troops for either side. We cannot take you to Moscow, where already there is terrible civil war'.

"All the seething square roared at him; the sailors began to surge forward. Suddenly another door was flung wide; in it stood two or three brakeman, a fireman or so. 'This way, comrades!' cried one. 'We will take you to Moscow - or Vladivostok, if you like! Long live the revolution!'"

One soldier remarked that some "look down on us Russians because so long we tolerated a medieval monarchy... But we saw that the tsar was not the only tyrant in the world; capitalism was worse, and in all the countries of the world capitalism was emperor."

Reed is present at the congress of soviets straight after the October insurrection. The elected representatives were "great masses of shabby soldiers, grimy workmen, peasants - poor men, bent and scarred in the brute struggle for existence."

There were hugely important votes to end the war, grant workers' control of industry, give the land to the peasants, and begin to build a socialist society. A right-wing delegate thought he could vote to continue the war, surrounded by soldiers fresh from the front.

"It was exactly 10.35 when Kamenev asked all in favour of the proclamation to hold up their cards. One delegate dared to raise his hand against, but the sudden sharp outburst around him brought it swiftly down."

In the penultimate chapter, Reed makes an important departure from the wonderful journey he's taken you on. The style changes; it is a full-bodied defence of the socialist ideas at the heart of the Russian revolution, the first time ever the exploited took power across a country.

But Reed has you sold long before this. "I suddenly realised that the devout Russian people no longer needed priests to pray them into heaven. On earth they were building a kingdom more bright than any heaven had to offer."

- 'Ten Days That Shook the World': £9.99 from leftbooks.co.uk

Radio 4's 'beautiful' Ten Days adaptation is 'required listening'

Beautifully made and acted ten-part radio series. May be confusing at times for those not well-versed in the various factions and ebbs and flows of the revolution. But for atmosphere alone this is required listening.

Anoushka Alexander

- 'Ten Days That Shook the World' is airing on BBC Radio 4 and [available on iPlayer](#)

Film: Reds

Flawed but informative biopic of revolutionary journalist reed

Scott Jones

The 1981 film 'Reds' about the American socialist journalist John 'Jack' Reed is not the movie version of 'Ten Days That Shook the World'. It dedicates too little of its three-hour 20-minute running time to the events of

1917.

However, it's still enjoyable, informative and worth watching, both for those new to and familiar with the Russian revolution.

Early on, viewers get a measure of the man. At a dinner at a Liberal Club, following a speech urging men to enlist and fight in World War One, Reed is asked to give his comments on the causes of the war. He stands, pauses, and then simply says "profits" before sitting back down.

Reds charts Reed's trajectory from radical journalist upsetting liberals, to his activities covering the work of the Industrial Workers of the World union, to his transformation from observer into a revolutionary himself during the Russian revolution.

The film brings out some of the atmosphere of that period. In one scene Reed attends a meeting of Russian workers discussing whether to strike. The workers ask him to speak on the attitude of American workers to the war.

At first he is reluctant. He is a journalist, with no relevant "credentials" as he puts it - but the workers urge him to speak, saying "everyone has credentials." Reed gets up and tells the workers that if they strike, then American workers will join them.

The next scenes show him distributing leaflets, taking part in marches and attending meetings addressed by Lenin and Trotsky.

After the revolution his transformation is complete. He returns to the US and throws himself into the battle between the revolutionaries and the reformists in the Socialist Party USA. Following a split, he helps found and lead the new Communist Party, and represents it at the world congress of the new Third International back in revolutionary Russia.

Some of the degeneration of the revolution is referenced - the rise of the bureaucracy around Zinoviev, Kamenev and Stalin - but this is not adequately explained. Another shortcoming is the absence of Lenin, Trotsky and their decisive role.

The use of eyewitnesses, interviews with contemporaries of Reed that intersperse the film, provides an interesting insight. Though they are sometimes aimless contributions, I particularly liked one older American man, transformed into a teenager again when recollecting how happy he was when heard there was a revolution in Russia.

It's flawed, but Reds is a decent introduction to some of the events of the Russian revolution, when workers and peasants took charge of their own destiny and inspired millions around the world.

Film: October

Revolutionary pointer to the future of cinema and society

Ben Robinson

Revolutions overturn the existing order. In both content and style then, Sergei Eisenstein's 'October' (1928) was revolutionary cinema.

It depicts the 1917 revolution - not by following the story of individuals, but by portraying through allusion and re-enactment the clash of the class forces that transformed Russia and the world.

It opens with workers dismantling a statue of the tsar, setting the scene for the February revolution. The lives of the poor and oppressed are contrasted with the decadence of the aristocracy.

As workers decide they can't take war and grinding poverty anymore, they move onto the streets.

The wavering of the ranks of the army - to defend the old order, or to join the masses in building a new one - is painted across the screen. When the state fights back, the rifles firing at the workers are intercut with scenes of the tsarist press - both aiming to maintain the interests of the elite.

This film is wholeheartedly on the side of the revolution. Many of those playing scenes or in the crowds were there ten years prior, active participants. The possibility, the inspiration, the human material to create such a film were born out of the revolution it portrays.

But so too was the film's undoing. Commissioned to celebrate the tenth anniversary of its subject, the depiction of Trotsky leading events alongside Lenin did not suit the Stalinist cabal then engaged in pushing back many revolutionary gains.

The reminder of Trotsky's role, just as the regime was purging him and others from the country, did Stalin's cause no favours. So celluloid Trotsky was purged as well!

Even recut and changed, as with much revolutionary art, it fell out of official favour, replaced with dull, placid 'socialist realism'.

The recently restored version of October, premiered in Berlin in 2012 and including Trotsky, stands as a testament to the time, and a pointer to the future of cinema and society.

Russian Revolution on Netflix: '47 minutes I won't get back'

Well there's 47 minutes of my life I won't get back. 'The Russian Revolution' on Netflix.

Basically, the Romanovs weren't bad people; Nicholas II abdicated because he loved Russia; Lenin was a dictator; poor Rasputin was only trying to help the tsar's son.

Virtually no mention of Trotsky. The only mention of the civil war was when it started and when it ended. And Lenin only became a revolutionary because the capitalists wouldn't give his mother a lift to see his brother's execution.

Oh, and apparently tsarist prison and exile was quite luxurious by today's standards.

Jimmy Tyson

- 'The Russian Revolution' is [available on netflix.com](http://www.netflix.com)

Countdown to Revolution on BBC 2: 'right-wing overkill'

BBC 2's documentary on Russian revolution. Right-wing overkill.

Anyone who has ever written a book attacking revolutionary Russia - Sebag Montefiore, Figes, Sebestyen, Rapaport, plus Martin Amis and the plummiest ever BBC correspondent Bridget Kendall.

Ranged against them? Tariq Ali and China Miéville. Call it balance if you want.

A relentless focus on psychology at the expense of an understanding of mass movements - Trotsky's arrogance, Lenin's desire for revenge for his brother's death! To paraphrase Lenin: when everyone is a psychologist, no one is a psychologist.

These were utterly self-sacrificing men. Lenin did, yes, die of a stroke, but not before he took a bullet. And we know what happened to Trotsky.

An entirely predictable travesty.

Paul Gerrard

I thought the role of Stalin pre-revolution was over-egged. The programme focused on personalities and appearances excessively.

The fundamental differences between Trotsky and Stalin were glossed over. The end summation only had one short positive appraisal by Tariq Ali!

Gary Kandinsky

I only lasted ten minutes. Seemed like Lenin was a bit annoyed and decided to have a revolution.

Alison Hill

- Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party, responds to the BBC's attempt to smear the revolution: socialistparty.org.uk/videos
 - 'Russia 1917: Countdown to Revolution' is [available on BBC iPlayer](#)
-

No cuts - hands off King George A&E!

Scott Jones, East London Socialist Party

People queued up outside Ilford town hall to sign the Socialist Party's petition to save King George A&E in east London on 14 October as campaigners marched to voice opposition to its closure.

The plans would mean the loss of 240 acute beds, which would be a disaster for the one million people in the area.

Kicking off the day of action in Central Park, Dagenham, an ex-Ford Dagenham worker said there needed to be marches like this

everywhere to save the NHS. In contrast the Labour leader of Barking and Dagenham council summed up the attitude of the local Blairites saying: "This isn't about politics"!

In reality, the decision is definitely a political one. A combination of the Tory government's £22 billion cuts through so-called 'sustainability and transformation plans' (STPs) and private finance initiatives (PFI) - expanded under the Blair/Brown Labour governments and carried on by successive Tory-led governments - are bleeding the NHS white.

The cost of building the nearby Queen's Hospital in Romford through PFI has bankrupted the Barking, Havering and Redbridge NHS trust and that's why King George's A&E is being axed.

We need a mass movement of health workers and communities linked to a political alternative to save the NHS.

The Socialist Party put forward these demands on the day and was supported by campaigners and the public alike.

Our placards were snapped up, we sold 55 copies of the Socialist paper and raised over £80 in fighting fund.

At a meeting in Redbridge Town Hall at the end of the march the organisers thanked us for our support.

Can you donate to the Socialism 2017 appeal?

Ken Douglas, Socialist Party national treasurer

We are calling on all members and supporters of the Socialist Party to donate to the Socialism 2017 appeal. We have set an ambitious target to raise £30,000 at the Saturday night rally on 11 November because that is what we need to ensure that we can go into 2018 with our finances strengthened.

This year, and in this particular issue of the Socialist, we are celebrating the anniversary of the Russian revolution and drawing out the lessons for the workers' movement today.

The programme and the methods of the Bolsheviks were crucial to that victory, and underpinning this was the finance that enabled them to produce their paper, Pravda, their leaflets and other material. This was hard won and desperately needed - as soldiers at the front wrote saying "we are living only on the rumour of your papers".

The world is not the same as in 1917 but one hundred years later the gap between rich and poor is greater than ever and capitalism still can't guarantee a decent life for the majority. Even in the richest countries young people today will be 43% worse off than their parents.

Theresa May claims that capitalism is the best way to raise living standards - that may be true for the richest thousand people in Britain who have seen their wealth double in the last ten years but it won't convince young people that there is a future for them under this failing system.

Socialist ideas

Just as in 1917, socialist ideas are the key to building an alternative. In the 1980s Militant, the forerunner to the Socialist Party, showed how the ruling class could be defeated - by building mass campaigns to resist the Thatcher government's cuts in Liverpool and for mass non-payment of the poll tax. At the same time we linked those struggles to the need to change the system.

Like the Bolsheviks, we have no rich backers. That's why we need your support to help raise the finance to enable us to get our ideas out to as wide an audience as possible. A proportion of the money we raise at Socialism 2017 will also go to assist our sister parties in the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI - the socialist international to which the Socialist Party is affiliated).

You can help the work of the Socialist Party and the CWI. Can you give £5, £50 or £500? Can you ask other members and supporters to donate? Every donation, no matter how small, will make a difference and all of it will go to building support for socialist ideas.

Uprising to save the NHS!**Heather Rawling**

An NHS 'uprising' took place in Grantham, Lincolnshire, on Saturday 14 October! A determined 800-strong demonstration wound its way through the town. People are fighting against the night time closure of Grantham A&E and the systematic downgrading of services in their local hospital.

But this was more than just about Grantham A&E. Campaigners in Louth created a banner around the theme of an NHS uprising against cuts, closures and privatisation.

After their local protest they took it to a Lincoln protest against the closure of a walk-in centre and then Grantham. Their plan is to take it around elsewhere where there are threats to the NHS as a way of helping to build links between campaigns.

Fiery speeches from many campaigners, including NHS staff, explained the impact of losing services. This included a speech from Socialist Party member Steve Score, representing the Save Glenfield Children's Hospital campaign.

Hundreds turn out for rally aimed at removing west Wales Tory MP

Dave Warren, Llanelli and West Wales Socialist Party

Haverfordwest is a small market town in south west Wales and in the marginal Preseli Pembrokeshire constituency of Tory MP and former secretary of state for Wales Stephen Crabb. On 14 October, the town centre was packed with around 300 people attending an anti-austerity rally organised by the People's Assembly and addressed by the political journalist Owen Jones.

A procession of speakers lambasted the Tory government's austerity measures and there was a moving contribution from a local man who had successfully appealed in court against the Bedroom tax as his so-called extra bedroom was in fact needed for a carer for his disabled child.

Owen Jones rightly held out the prospect of replacing this weak and divided government with a Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn. He is clearly targeting marginal Tory constituencies such as Preseli Pembrokeshire and urged everyone at the rally to talk to neighbours and workmates, knock on doors and so on to win the constituency for Labour.

That is all well and good but Jones did not mention his lack of support for Corbyn prior to the general election. It is only because of the anti-austerity policies represented by Corbyn that Labour now has any realistic prospect of winning Tory marginals and forming a government.

It was left to Socialist Party member Mark Evans to outline a strategy for driving out the Tories. As secretary of the Carmarthenshire County Unison branch, Mark described the effect of local authority cutbacks on his members and pointed out that it was a Labour Welsh government and Labour or Plaid Cymru councils who were passing on the Tory cuts in Wales.

To enthusiastic applause from the rally he said that if local authorities joined together to set 'needs' budgets and refused to implement cuts, this could trigger a campaign alongside the trade unions to force the Tories out.

Socialist Party members held a campaign stall before and during the rally and sold 40 copies of the Socialist.

Sheffield Labour council threatens peaceful protesters with prison

Calvin Payne, Sheffield trees campaigner

Two months have passed since Sheffield's Labour council won a High Court injunction against peaceful protesters fighting the felling of thousands of street trees in the city. The injunction prevents people from entering or remaining within work areas on the street but also attempts to restrict online posting on the subject.

Since then a growing number of campaigners have been protesting around the terms of the injunction, including breaking the court order. Many protesters have disguised themselves and continued peacefully preventing the felling programme from being carried out.

This period has also seen an escalation of oppressive measures against the campaign. Sheffield council has spent thousands of pounds on 'evidence gatherers' who attend protests filming and recording but also

following people home from protests, filming people arriving and leaving and monitoring Facebook and Twitter accounts.

Recently one of these evidence gatherers made an unfounded accusation of assault which saw a pensioner held in police custody until video footage showed that no such incident occurred. A campaign of direct action has been going on for over two years and, despite 14 arrests and charges, no-one has been convicted of anything as a result.

On 27 October myself and others will attend Sheffield Combined Court to hear the latest allegations of injunction breaking against us and have a trial date fixed. Contempt of court carries a prison sentence and our Labour council is requesting this course of action from the court.

All of this stems from a secret 25-year £2.2 billion PFI contract between Sheffield council and Amey which has only been seen by a small number of senior officials. We fight on to prevent the ecological destruction but also to end the imposing of such secretive contracts for multinational firms to run public services in Sheffield and across the country.

Socialist Students 'welcome' Hillary Clinton to Swansea

Socialist Students from across south Wales gathered in Swansea to protest the visit of former American presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Clinton was honoured at the Swansea University Bay Campus but also went away with boos and shouts of "Bernie would have won!" ringing in her ears. The latter a reference to the left candidate Bernie Sanders, blocked from taking on Trump by the Democrat establishment. The protest grew in numbers and was picked up by press in the United States. See more on Facebook, search 'Swansea Socialist Students'.

Campaign against political repression in Hong Kong

Adam N Lee, chinaworker.info

Protesters gathered outside China's embassies and consulates, as well as the Hong Kong government's economic and trade offices, in 22 cities across 20 countries on 12-13 October. The protests were part of a newly launched international campaign, 'Global Solidarity - Stop Repression in Hong Kong'.

Protesters in Bangalore, India, defied a police ban in order to go ahead with their demonstration, while in the Russian capital Moscow anti-democratic laws that severely limit freedom of expression meant that only one brave young woman was permitted to take part in the protest outside the Chinese embassy.

The protests and the campaign statement from Stop Repression in Hong Kong were presented at a press conference in the Legislative Council on 13 October.

Speeches from three TDs (MPs) in the Irish parliament - Socialist Party members Paul Murphy, Ruth Coppinger and Mick Barry - were shown on video. It underlined that this was not a one-off protest but the start of a campaign to increase international pressure on the unelected Hong Kong government over its recent attacks on democratic rights.

Sally Tang Mei-ching of Socialist Action (CWI in Hong Kong), a coordinator of the campaign, described the recent repression in Hong Kong as unprecedented. "Left-wing councillors, labour activists and union

representatives of different countries have recently helped to launch this campaign, organising through it a series of international solidarity actions," she explained.

When asked by the media if the international protests would achieve anything, she stressed that it was only the beginning of the campaign and the government should have every reason to be worried that their policies were arousing concern and criticism around the world.

The international solidarity from grassroots organisations and ordinary people can encourage further mass resistance against the repression inside Hong Kong and also in China against the CCP (so-called 'Communist') dictatorship, she said.

Political prisoners

Also in attendance at the Hong Kong press conference were ousted legislator 'Long Hair' of the League of Social Democrats (LSD), who is a prime victim of the government's undemocratic purge, and four legislators, including Fernando Cheung Chiu-hung of the Labour Party and Shui Ka Chung, an independent pan-democrat.

The campaign is demanding the release of political prisoners in Hong Kong. This is a term the CCP-controlled Hong Kong government hotly rejects. However, the use of the courts to impose harsh jail sentences on democracy activists, including many youngsters and prominent representatives of the 2014 'Umbrella Revolution', is widely seen as a politically motivated attack on the democracy movement and an attempt to criminalise mass protests.

A new trial of 20 activists was held on 13 October. They were accused of defying a court order to clear the Mongkok occupation site during the Umbrella protests, and all 20 were found guilty.

This outcome was expected given the current repressive climate in Hong Kong. The sentences will be handed down this week and it is feared many if not all the 20 will also go to jail, where 16 young activists are already serving sentences for their role in political protests calling for democracy.

The government's political purge is particularly targeting the more radical and struggle-orientated sections of the democracy movement such as the LSD and student-led party Demosisto.

- Full article and more reports see chinaworker.info

Theatre: We're Still Here

Powerful picture of the Port Talbot steel workers' struggle

Geoff Jones, Swansea Socialist Party

The future of Port Talbot steelworks, the last big steel-making plant in Wales, is hanging by a hair.

A year ago owners Tata Steel threatened to close the plant, destroy the only large employer in Port Talbot and throw 6,000 out of work. Their main complaint was the size of the retired workers' pension fund.

Under the threat of closure, the steel workers - but not the pensioners - were forced to vote for one of two options, either of which meant a cut in pensions. 'We're Still Here' dramatises the effect of this threat on the workers.

It is like no other play. For a start, there is no theatre with comfortable seats facing a stage. The action takes place in a huge, aircraft-hangar-sized shed, part of the old steelworks, lit only by spotlights.

The audience is ushered in, and stands around or moves while the action takes place around and among them. Some parts are played by professionals, and others by actual steelworkers themselves.

Most of the action consists of monologues.

An old ex-worker describes the first few days of unemployment - first the feeling of freedom to stay in bed in the morning, soon the gaping hole in his life. A group of workers pushing a machine through the crowd talks about the comradeship of working together.

A young ex-worker talks about trips to the jobcentre and being told to look for 'opportunities' in retail. A sort of Greek chorus speaks of the grass where the huge Ebbw Vale works once stood, and runs through the battles of Welsh workers, from the 1831 Merthyr rising to the 1984-85 miners' strike.

Finally, the audience is invited to sit around in a circular discussion mimicking a trade union branch meeting.

One worker finds it too much for him and dashes out. Another berates the union for not taking a harder line. A union official describes how hard he had fought management, even with trips to speak to the owners in Mumbai, wrecking his marriage.

The performance ends with a feeling of 'well, what's to be done?' "We're still here" - the anthem of Welsh nationalism - sounds more like a cry for help than one of defiance.

The whole experience gave a powerful picture of the feelings of steel workers. It obviously hit home with the audience, a mixture of local people - including present and former steel workers - and regular theatregoers.

Sadly there was no talk of the wider picture of the economy - or of the only permanent solution: the nationalisation of steelmaking, and the heights of the wider economy, under democratic workers' management and control.

Conference on state spies and sabotage: who's watching who?

'John Smith', PCS union rep, Coventry

It is clear undercover surveillance of trade unionists and left activists has taken place - contrary to the myth that it couldn't happen in Britain.

Coventry Trade Union Council and the local Tom Mann branch of general union Unite held a conference in Coventry on 14 October. Entitled 'Who's watching whom - justice, trade union and democratic rights', the event drew 115 people throughout the day.

Ricky Tomlinson, known by millions for his role as Jim Royle in the BBC hit 'The Royle Family', was one of the main speakers. He described his victimisation for trade union activism which saw him receive a jail sentence! He gave a passionate speech which received a standing ovation from the entire room.

Dave Smith, author of 'Blacklisted', spoke about the blacklisting of trade unionists in construction.

Helen Steel spoke about her experience of abuse by an undercover policeman who started a false relationship with her before disappearing - all part of a spying operation targeting activists.

Chris Baugh, assistant general secretary of civil service union PCS, spoke about surveillance and attempts to sabotage unions by the state. He highlighted the need for action on public sector pay.

The state actively works to undermine unions. This includes the CPSA in 1980s - predecessor of the PCS - following the election of John Macreadie as general secretary. John was a supporter of Militant (now the Socialist Party).

And the Socialist reported in 2016 on the activities of one 'Carlo Neri', who the police had placed at taxpayers' expense as a mole in the Socialist Party.

The event was illuminating and inspiring for all who attended. It helped remind us what we are up against in trying to build fighting, democratic trade unions - and ultimately, get rid of capitalism. However, the speakers were not pessimistic.

On the contrary, all who attended left the conference fired up and with a greater understanding of how the capitalist state works and the lengths it will go to. The system can be defeated by a mass movement armed with a socialist programme to change society.

- Watch the main speakers at tinyurl.com/WhosWatchingWhom

'Dazzling' Bad Art show points to socialist future

Paul Gerrard, Salford Socialist Party

Skipton is a quiet market town better known as the 'Gateway to the Yorkshire Dales' than it is for revolution. But on 6 October, socialist artists and activists, as well as the general public, from Manchester, Lancashire and Yorkshire gathered to view a dazzling selection of work by artists loosely grouped around the 'Bad Art' project.

Here were surrealist collages, intricate installations, disturbing paintings, photographs of demos, bold placards, banners, posters and cartoons in amazing variety. There was no monopoly of style or political position.

'Bad Art'?

'Bad Art' is not a school or genre, but an international campaign which recognises that art can inspire us in our struggle for socialism, and that imagination must be part of the DNA of a socialist future. Several of the exhibitors here have had no formal artistic training, but have a passion to create.

The organiser of the show, surrealist artist and Socialist Party member Peter Harris, explains: "The diversity of the show was my main focus... The arts enrich our lives, as does the power of the imagination - and although completely focused on the primary need for a socialist transformation of society, we must never lose sight of the importance of creativity."

Alan Hardman, the legendary Socialist Party cartoonist whose work has appeared in *Militant* and the *Socialist* over four decades, was present to meet visitors and talk about his work. Unfortunately, Jean Stockdale, an internationally known 'outsider artist' who was inspired to exhibit there, was unable to attend.

The 17th century Mill Bridge Gallery, overlooking the 18th century Leeds-Liverpool Canal, provided a fitting setting for art which points to a socialist future. The event was attended by 80 people, more than any other preview at the gallery.

- The Bad Art exhibition is on at the Mill Bridge Gallery in Skipton until 4 November: millbridgegallery.co.uk
- For more about art and the struggle for socialism, and further Bad Art show dates across the world, visit badartworld.net

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/26320>

