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## Tories torn apart, French workers and youth in revolt, 'populism' on the rise ... revolution in the air?

# Preparing the struggle for socialism in 2019

Peter Taaffe, Socialist Party general secretary

"I have never been more ashamed to be a Conservative. We continue to be led by a mule flogging a dead horse" (Allison Pearson, Daily Telegraph columnist). This blistering attack on Prime Minister Theresa May and the Tory government - before the leadership challenge was called - from its own side is a fitting epitaph on their futile attempts to effect an 'orderly' withdrawal from the EU.

This issue that has dominated the past year has resulted in the defeat of May and her government in parliament, and possibly her exit as Tory party leader. She nevertheless hopes to drag out her political death agony for a while longer yet, after having survived, weakened, the recent 'vote of confidence' by Tory MPs.

This completely bears out our contention that the Tories will suffer the biggest split in their ranks for over 170 years, since the Corn Laws of the early 19th century.

However, all capitalist parties in Britain, Europe and the world are split in the teeth of mounting mass opposition to their policies of brutal austerity. So too are many social democratic and other left parties within the labour movements.

What should be our approach to the capitalist EU, which is a vehicle for carrying out that policy on a European scale? The [mass revolt of the 'gilets jaunes'](#) (yellow vests) in France is the most visible pointer to what is likely to come in 2019 in many European and other countries.

### Revolt in France

This spontaneous revolt of the French workers and middle class against the semi-dictatorial regime of Macron has many lessons for workers elsewhere.

An arrogant overlord - hitherto contemptuous of the masses - has employed brutal methods to forcibly disperse demonstrators, including even rounding up school children who were then compelled to sit on the floor with their hands behind their heads like prisoners of war.

This is a thinly veiled civil war and all of this was broadcast on TV throughout the world.

The leaderless 'yellow vests' then forced Macron to make some concessions which has not quelled the revolt but, on the contrary, led them to demand more concessions and organise further demonstrations to pursue them.

Imagine what would have been gained if the trade union leaders had put themselves at the head of this movement, then called for and organised a general strike? This would have led not only to the total defeat of Macron and driven him from office but also prepared the ground for the idea of working-class power, of socialism in France. As one French worker commented: "We don't want the crumbs, we want the whole baguette."

All the downtrodden, the victims of the social war against the rights and living standards carried out by the capitalists throughout Europe, have generated a mood of 'let's act like the French'. Socialist Party newspaper sellers on the streets in Britain have found a thirst above all for action, not just words, against the bosses and their rotten system.

The Egyptian dictatorship has even banned the sale of yellow vests, for fear that the Egyptian masses will return to the streets and try to complete the 2011 revolution, thereby setting off a new movement throughout North Africa and the Middle East.

Indeed, the underlying crisis of world capitalism, as we predicted, has intensified in the past year.

## World relations

A new crisis also looms in world relations. Trump has enormously ratcheted up tensions with the repudiation of the Iran nuclear deal and its political fallout, [increased conflict with China](#) both economically and militarily and now with Russia in a proposed new 'great power' nuclear arms race, in relations with the EU and practically the whole of the rest of the world.

This was reflected in the general outburst of laughter and jeering which greeted Trump's speech at the recent United Nations General Assembly where he nakedly reasserted US imperialism's doctrine of unilateralism to "make America great again". This was in place of the previous so-called 'rules-based' international 'cooperation' - a softer form of US capitalism's power and domination.

Moreover, his repudiation of the Paris agreement on climate change flies in the teeth of increased worldwide concern. This concern is reflected in significant mass movements and heightened consciousness in some of the countries and continents most immediately affected by the likely [terrible repercussions of an increase in the world's temperature](#), which is indisputable and can lead to a world climate catastrophe.

This will only be completely avoided through the ultimate replacement of uncontrolled and ruinous capitalism by a new democratic socialist world. This in turn is only possible through the methods of revolutionary and socialist struggle for which we stand.

The capitalist economic 'experts' claim that in 2017 there was a 'synchronised economic acceleration' - with every major advanced economy except Britain on a 'growth path', signified by a drop in official levels of unemployment not seen for decades.

However, the reality is that this 'boom' is very uneven - not all countries have experienced it, even some of the economically developed countries. It was based on unprecedented levels of part-time and casual workers - very often cheated out of wages for weeks and months - and therefore was extremely lopsided.

It was also founded on a continuation of low wages and generalised wage repression, with little real substantial long-term benefit accruing to the working class. In Britain, for instance, wage stagnation is the worst since the Napoleonic wars at the beginning of the 19th century. Elsewhere austerity is still continuing in Europe and for the majority of the working class in the US.

The neocolonial world has in general suffered a severe crisis, with an economic contraction in Brazil unprecedented since World War Two, and a significant dimming of economic prospects in Argentina, Turkey and South Africa. However, where there has been even a slight economic upturn in some countries this has encouraged the working class to move to 'take back' some of what they lost in the 'great recession' and its aftermath.

In the US there has been a powerful re-emergence of the working class in a series of strikes, including [militant teachers' strikes in West Virginia](#) and elsewhere. In logistics giant UPS there has been a rank-and-file revolt against a contract negotiated by the union leadership. These and other disputes are leading towards the biggest number of workers taking strike action since the 1980s.

This 'boom' is founded on a massive extension of debt, including household debt, which has risen in general in the advanced industrial countries. Global government debt skyrocketed to 60% of gross world product and total world debt has soared from \$173 trillion in 2010 to over \$250 trillion today.

Moreover, a continual and colossal increase of inequality, together with intensified geopolitical factors have contributed to the highly unstable character of this 'boom'.

## Inequality

Regarding the colossal further growth of inequality: "Billionaires made more money in 2017 than in any year in recorded history ... The past 30 years have seen far greater wealth creation than in the Gilded Age" of the late 19th century, comments the UBS Billionaires Report.

This period was, as we know, a prelude to the mass discontent which ultimately [led to the Russian Revolution](#) and, following this, the prospect of world revolution.

This is before the fallout from the effects of the incipient trade war between the US and China, Canada and Mexico is felt. Retaliation will undoubtedly be undertaken by China to a larger extent than at present if this 'war' continues. Farmers in the US Midwest and elsewhere - an important base for Trump - will be seriously affected by counter-measures against US agricultural exports, particularly soya, to China.

In order to mollify his base, Trump claims "it is easy to win a trade war" but that is not the experience of the 1930s with the Smoot-Hawley Act which aggravated the depression.

The mid-term elections represented a big rebuff to Trump. In Britain, it would have been a 'landslide' in electoral terms for the Democrats, who scored an 8.5% lead over the Republicans in the popular vote for the House of Representatives.

Most alarming for the capitalists is the likely fallout from an "open-ended trade war with China".

No area of the world is now free from the threat of hunger, economic collapse and war. A serious head-on confrontation, small or even 'accidental' military clashes are rooted in the situation. Increased tensions have been deliberately ramped up by the US between the major imperialist powers, including Russia.

The Chinese elite and regime have gone from being a 'strategic partner' of the US to a 'strategic rival', while Russia has recently come in for the same treatment on the military front. Trump and his spokespersons have called into question the 1987 nuclear treaty signed by Gorbachev and Reagan to freeze strategic nuclear weapons. However, the overall result was to ratchet up conflict between the US and its rivals in the rest of the world.

## Populism

Populism in general, right-wing populism in particular as well as the new left formations, is on the rise across the transatlantic world, highlighted by the [election of Bolsonaro in Brazil](#).

They supposedly 'delivered' the [vote in favour of Brexit](#) in the UK, the election of La Lega and other right-wing forces in Italy, and the authoritarian populists in control of Hungary and Poland. The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) is on the rise. Right-wing populists are also well entrenched in Austria, France, the Netherlands and Sweden.

The talk of a new 'civil war' developing in the US is not far from reality, but this will be a class war.

The rise of this politically nebulous populism is rooted in the enduring legacy of the world economic crisis of 2007-08. Capitalist analysts, including Francis Fukuyama and an array of commentators, in effect jeer that it was not the left but the right who mostly gained from the political fallout from this crisis. This turns reality completely on its head.

The working class did initially, in many countries, turn towards the labour movement and the left for an explanation and solutions to the crisis. The left could have gained substantially given the severity of the recession, which led to the economic discrediting of capitalism and its political agents.

Some commentators described this crisis as worse in its lasting economic effects than even the depression of the 1930s. Huge layers of the population, not just the working class but swathes of the middle class, confronted with the impossibility of them and their children acquiring even modest wealth, and the decimation through austerity of decent housing, education and social services, initially inclined then towards

the left. New left formations have also grown in this period, as shown by the initial support for Bernie Sanders, then Jeremy Corbyn in Britain, and others.

However, they were confronted mainly by the spectacle of social democracy in Europe and elsewhere pursuing the same policies of austerity, as did the Democrats in the US under Obama. With Hillary Clinton as candidate, [their programme in the last US presidential elections amounted to 'more of the same'](#). It was this that provided the opening for Trump and the variegated populist forces internationally of the right to gain a significant foothold.

But the long-term growth of the right is very tenuous, as witnessed in Germany at the present time. It is true that the right and far right have gained electorally but so did the Greens in regional elections in Bavaria and Hesse. Moreover, [as our German comrades have pointed out](#), at the same time as the right was chalking up these successes, gaining massive publicity for their demonstrations, even larger left demonstrations - for instance of 250,000 in Berlin - marched opposing the far right and the racist attacks on immigrants.

So already the whip of counter-revolution has moved significant sections of workers, women and young people into action. Trump will be undermined by these revolts which will grow and have been brewing for a long time in the US. Trump is preparing the ground for a huge political radicalisation. He warns: 'If you don't vote for me socialism looms', which can only further popularise socialism for millions!

Of course capitalist politicians systematically lie but Trump outdoes them all. In one recent rally it was estimated that there were 74 verifiable falsehoods! This obscene, pampered bourgeois, who was officially a millionaire at the age of eight (!), managed to scrape the presidential election win with 3 million less votes than Hillary Clinton because of the built-in bias and gerrymandering of the American constitution.

The [conflict over the Supreme Court nominee Kavanaugh](#) opened up colossal social divisions, which massively alienated women but also produced a sense of revulsion throughout the US. This act of stuffing his toadies into the Supreme Court is the first step of Trump to restrict the right to abortion in the US.

The magnificent pro-choice revolt of the Irish working class, [with the Socialist Party in Ireland playing an important role](#), against the relics of Catholic feudal and semi-feudal reaction, particularly in the social field, can be repeated in the US, as it has already in Argentina [and Spain](#), and win mass support from other sectors of the working class. However, the recent [strike of women workers in Glasgow](#), Scotland, for equal pay also led to the active support of their brothers, the male refuse workers.

Revolutions can often begin with the movement of the most oppressed layers, [particularly indicated by the women in the Russian Revolution](#). They can act before the heavy battalions of the working class as a whole move into struggle and indeed can become a beacon and catalyst for them.

In this sense the current movements of women can be powerful precursors for a period of revolution, even and particularly in the US. There is pent-up anger and frustration which have accumulated over decades among women, the working class, and young people moving into struggle over student debt.

The neocolonial world - Latin America, Africa and Asia - faces in the next period even more intensified economic and social upheaval. This arises from the generalised character of this crisis which does not allow for one significant region to escape the maladies of crisis-ridden capitalism.

It is symbolised by the desperate surge of refugees from all these continents, be it from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, or now from drugs-riven countries in Latin America with millions desperately searching for 'peace' and a 'better life' for them and their families.

Following the world crisis of 2007-08 there was a certain relocation of capital investment from the crisis-ridden developed capitalist world to the 'emerging' - now submerging - countries of Latin America, Africa and Asia, raising expectations of a substantial economic 'bounce'. That has now dissipated in the neocolonial world.

## **Brazil**

No country typifies this more than Brazil, the biggest and most industrialised country in Latin America. The victory of Bolsonaro in the recent presidential elections represents a new form of right-wing populism clearly intending to rule through a form of militarised parliamentary Bonapartism.

Unfortunately, the ground has been prepared for this regime by the failure of Lula Da Silva's PT (Workers' Party). The massive corruption which scars Brazilian society came to be symbolised, for significant sections of the masses, by the PT regime of Lula and Dilma Rouseff.

One measure of this terrifying collapse is that Brazil in 2018 has experienced as many murders, most of them drug-related, as the annualised average deaths in the Syrian civil war. Bolsonaro has openly supported the last military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1985. He has lauded 'torture' and intends to extirpate 'communism' - by which he means democracy and workers' rights - including measures against the trade unions.

The rapacious Brazilian capitalists have wistfully looked back to the military regime which only ended in 1985 in Brazil. In the last few years they have in effect tested out the water by engaging in a 'slow coup', largely parliamentary, achieved through stages: first, the removal of PT president Dilma and then the imprisonment of Lula himself, one of the founders of the party, on the grounds of corruption. Without excusing the PT's corruption, its accusers were in fact up to their necks in even greater corruption themselves!

The lessons of Brazil must be absorbed by all workers. Many will no doubt be legitimately fearful about the imminent imposition of a military regime, and some of even 'fascism' in Brazil. There are undoubtedly elements of this in the situation, where the new regime could lean primarily on extra-parliamentary and military measures in order to attack and weaken the left.

However for all the reasons that we have explained previously, this regime does not have a sufficient social base - a mass middle class that could be mobilised to atomise the working class - for the consolidation of this government or even a strong military regime equivalent to the last military junta, let alone fascism.

Moreover, its coming to power can act like a crack of thunder to awaken the Brazilian masses - and not just them but in the whole of Latin America - to the real danger that they confront. Events in the biggest and most important country in Latin America, Brazil, will be watched avidly both in the rest of the continent and internationally. We must do everything, both politically and materially, to assist our comrades in this crucial struggle.

## Latin America

[Argentina is not far behind Brazil](#) in terms of a conflict between the classes. In March of this year what appeared to be the whole of Argentina took to the streets in Buenos Aires and elsewhere. This was a protest against the neoliberal policies of the reactionary Macri government.

Once the ninth richest country in the world, Argentina has gone through a process of collapse and instability. Macri came to power as a capitalist solution to the chronic instability which has plagued the country. Within months he faced a general strike in protest against his cuts but he still continued with counter-reforms although seeking to soften their impact. At any time there can be a social explosion.

The failures of other left governments in Venezuela, Brazil, etc, are a warning for the Mexican masses who have just [elected Andrés Manuel López Obrador as president](#). In Venezuela, Hugo Chavez, who largely remained within the framework of Venezuelan and world capitalist markets, did not clearly call for the spreading of the revolution to the region and internationally.

Trump, the British capitalists and the capitalists in general seek to utilise [the current chaos in Venezuela](#) in order to discredit socialism: "Corbyn embodies the same approach as Chavez and will [create the same disastrous results](#)", say the British Tories.

The Trump regime with its repudiation of the Iran nuclear deal and further sanctions, both against Iran and those who dare to trade with the country, guarantees a further period of chronic instability and a poisoning of relations between the US and Iran.

This will spill over into the Middle East as a whole. It will not, as Trump seems to believe, encourage the 'liberal' capitalist opposition in Iran - let alone the working class who have also moved independently against the regime - to step up their opposition to the enriched ruling group of mullahs and the Revolutionary Guards.

It is now more likely that the opponents of the regime will be reluctant to open the door to Trump with his support for Israel, Saudi Arabia and the 'Sunni bloc' in opposition to predominantly Shia Iran.

The militarist, interventionist neocon John Bolton, Trump's national security secretary, has revealed that his real plans for Iran are regime change and the turning back of the clock to the times of the Shah!

## **Worldwide capitalist crisis**

There is now no area of the world, including Britain, where there are not political or social upheavals either taking place or expected. There is huge churning in the ranks of the working class, with millions looking for answers to the multitude of problems which the crisis of capitalism has created for them.

Many times in history, small groups have been rapidly transformed into significant large propaganda groups which can then form the basis for a small party and mass forces at a later stage. Preparing for this in the next period is an urgent task for us and the world working class.

The current position in Britain is also pregnant with many kinds of possibilities. Given the stalemate that exists, the May government could collapse at any time. Each proffered 'solution' from the different wings of the Tory party and all other parties becomes a colossal problem, as no sooner is it mentioned than it is kicked into the long grass.

One Tory MP neatly summed this up: "All our options are shit so we keep making shit decision after shit decision, in the hope that it's less shit than the other alternative."

If the government or even Labour accedes to a new EU referendum, Britain will enter unknown territory with the possibility of widespread mass outrage and violence at the spectacle that the ruling class just change the rules of 'democracy' whenever they think it is convenient. This could lay the basis for widespread clashes between the different camps over the EU, which would call into question whether a democratic referendum could be re-run.

Those Labour voices, erstwhile lefts such as Paul Mason who are now clearly advocating another referendum and remaining in the EU, do not have a class and internationalist approach. The European Union was conceived as a [neoliberal pro-capitalist construction](#) right from its inception and that remains the same with the [outlawing, at least on paper, of nationalisation](#) by a left government.

Of course this hallowed constitution is merely a piece of paper which could be brushed aside by an insurgent mass movement behind a left socialist Labour government determined to take measures in the interests of the working class.

But why put forward a false prospectus that the EU is 'progressive'? There is not an iota of this in either the original idea of the EU or the current support for the EU's practices. Its anti-working class character is clear.

Fight this bosses' club with socialist and internationalist policies. Oppose the capitalist EU, not with a narrow nationalist 'Britain first' policy, but a socialist and internationalist approach which links together the struggles of the working class of the continent in action for a socialist confederation of Europe.

At its heart would be the socialist planning of the resources of the continent for the benefit of the many - the working class - and not the handful of capitalists who presently control industry and wealth.

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# Our new year's message: Tories out - general election now!

We can force the Tories out. Mass action, organised and led by Jeremy Corbyn and the trade unions, can act to cut the fine thread from which May's ailing government hangs and secure a general election. Such is the urgent task faced by the workers' movement as we begin 2019.

Parliament's Christmas recess has allowed the Tory government to extend its agonies by a few more weeks.

The prime minister's Brexit strategy is reliant in large part on running down the clock. She hopes the closer it gets to the official 29 March 'leave' date the more the growing threat of a no-deal scenario can be used to help persuade MPs to back this bosses' deal.

Now a self-confessed 'dead woman walking' - forced to concede that she will not contest a future election as Tory leader - May is hoping to cling on long enough to secure a Brexit deal that protects the interests of Britain's capitalist class. It is expected a second parliamentary vote will take place in the week beginning 14 January.

Meanwhile, Jeremy Corbyn continues to face relentless pressure from the Blairites and their friends in the capitalist media to drop calls for a general election and instead focus on demanding a second referendum on EU membership.

To do so could be to throw a lifeline to the Tories - a possible 'way out' of the deadlock that does not require a change of government.

Corbyn must resist such calls and instead [use the opening weeks of 2019 to go on the offensive](#). A national 'Tories out' demonstration is planned for 12 January.

Not only should Corbyn issue a call for people to attend, he should plan to march at its head.

And, what's more, he should call on the trade unions - the largest democratic organisations of the working class - to step up to the plate and organise the protest directly.

2018 ended with the [mass mobilisation of French workers and young people](#) on to the streets, donning yellow vests against austerity.

Workers here can draw inspiration from this courageous movement, which has shaken French president Macron and forced him to make concessions worth €10 billion. In equivalent terms, this would be £7 billion - enough to end the crisis in social care. This shows what fighting back can achieve.

For millions of working-class people in Britain, Christmas in 2018 was a time of hardship and suffering. Tory austerity must not be allowed to continue into the New Year.

We need a Corbyn-led government. And we need a socialist alternative to capitalist misery and austerity. Why not make your New Year's resolution a pledge to [join us and help build the fightback](#) in 2019?

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## New Year. Same Universal Credit misery. Scrap it now!

**Scott Jones**

Nightmare stories of the misery faced by people receiving Universal Credit made headlines in 2018. At the start of 2019 around 1.4 million families are now receiving Universal Credit.

And it will not be a happy new year for many more as the figure receiving the benefit payments is due to rise to 7 million - many of them this year.

Universal Credit is the Tory-designed means-tested benefit that combines and cuts several existing benefits.

The millions already claiming it have faced [delays of months before receiving any money](#), leaving them with nothing to pay bills, rent and even buy food.

## Cost

The cost to the government of implementing Universal Credit is estimated at a huge £1.9 billion. But the cost to those at the sharp end of the roll-out is far greater.

Christmas was far from merry for one mother who revealed she had to resort to putting free sugar sachets in her little girl's stocking after the switch to Universal Credit left her barely able to cope. She hoped she would be able to get hold of a branch to use as a Christmas tree.

One man was left so desperate he attempted to kill himself while on the phone to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), saying: "I thought my life insurance was more likely to pay out in time to help my family."

The ex-ambulance worker faced a ten-week delay in receiving his benefits. In a sick twist he received them the same day he attempted suicide.

While being transferred to Universal Credit, my mother was left with a tenner a week to live on.

Under pressure, the government has been forced to delay the roll-out for some, and DWP secretary Amber Rudd claims she is willing to 'listen and learn'.

But we say: stop the roll-out and [scrap Universal Credit altogether](#). Replace it with a welfare system and wages which guarantee everyone a decent standard of living.

### The Socialist Party calls for:

- Reverse all benefit cuts: for living benefits without compulsion
- Kick out the privateers: bring all outsourced and privatised public services back in-house
- End austerity: for fully funded, publicly owned public services
- For a minimum wage of at least £10 an hour, as a step towards a real living wage for all

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# Rip-off landlords make money out of misery

Ian Pattison, East London Socialist Party

600 homeless people died in 2017 in England and Wales. Homeless deaths have increased every year since 2014, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The ONS study is limited to homeless people who live on the streets or in emergency accommodation. It excludes homeless people in bed and breakfasts or [sofa surfing](#), so the real figure is likely even higher.

It's not an unavoidable tragedy. Even the Tory-led Local Government Association admit homelessness services are £100 million short of what they need.

The homeless population in temporary accommodation is also up, rocketing to over 82,000 in England in 2018. Only 6% of London is open to rent if you're on housing benefit.

Big business can only think of profit. Councils spent almost £1 billion on temporary accommodation for homeless people in England last year. Another increase caused by rip-off landlords making money out of misery.

The solutions are simple. If people can't afford to rent, then [rents should be capped, controlled and cut](#).

£1 billion of council money going to the private sector is a waste. There should be a [mass programme of council-home building](#), to provide publicly owned, secure housing for all.

The cuts to housing and homelessness services that have taken place so far should be stopped and reversed.

Ultimately we can't control what we don't own. Taking the banks and major construction companies into democratic public ownership would allow their wealth to be used, not for gargantuan profits, but to build high-quality affordable housing for all.

## Yet another wage-busting fare hike? Nationalise rail now!

James Ivens

Queues on platforms, scuffles to squeeze aboard, delays and cancellations as the life sweats out of you. Is this what we're paying for with the 3.1% rail fare hike from 2 January?

Average wages only rose by 2.6% last year, which didn't even keep pace with inflation. Meanwhile, venal bosses moved against safety-critical train guards, [forcing transport union RMT to strike](#).

"98p from every £1 spent on fares goes into running the railway with fares covering day-to-day costs" says privateers' alliance the Rail Delivery Group, with "government investment effectively funding infrastructure improvements."

Why should shrink-wrapped commuters and striking rail workers believe a word of this? [These people are bandits!](#) Are we to understand they are running the railways for no gain?

But imagine bosses are spending 98% of our tickets on running costs. Why is the price always rising as the service declines? Answer: state subsidy, supposedly for infrastructure, is really for shareholders' profits.

Even if they do spend most of that on infrastructure - it's not working, is it? And no surprise. One public rail network, with 23 vampires scrabbling to monopolise its arteries and drink them dry.

The solution is obvious. Nationalisation and full funding.

And not as life support for the old bosses or a fresh breed of distant bureaucrats. Instead, nationalisation under the democratic control of rail workers and passengers, along with public transit and the top corporations, as part of a socialist plan for transport.

## Swansea council: early morning cabinet meeting nods through £24 million cuts

Alec Thraves, Swansea Socialist Party

If you want to sneak through £24 million of council cuts next year, call a cabinet meeting at 10am when most residents are at work, waffle through the ten minutes allowed for public questions and then vote unanimously

for the council officers' latest round of brutal cuts!

Within 20 minutes Swansea Labour's cabinet meeting agreed a projected loss this year of 145 teaching posts, 161 council jobs, including 127 from social services, and further cuts of £87 million over the next four years. Some departments face a 30% reduction in their budget.

Several Socialist Party members were able to attend the cabinet meeting to challenge these Labour austerity accomplices who pathetically bleat, year after year, that 'there is nothing we can do' except pass on the Tory cuts.

A vote of no confidence in Swansea Labour council was proposed from the public gallery on behalf of residents who are being let down year after year.

Another sham consultation process will now begin. As in previous years residents will only be asked to choose which services should be cut and which should be reduced.

Support for mobilising [with other Labour councils in Wales](#), alongside local government trade unions, teaching unions, parents, residents and community organisations to [set a no-cuts budget](#) never appears on the council's questionnaire!

It is increasingly urgent that Unison, with the other local government and teaching trade unions, prepare and mobilise their members to oppose compulsory job losses and further cuts to services.

- [Full report on socialistpartywales.org.uk](http://socialistpartywales.org.uk)

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## 'Austerity Kills' is message of Woking protest

From a Save Our Services in Surrey press release

On the fifth day of Christmas ... the Tories gave to us ... Austerity! This was one of the verses of the carol, 12 days of Christmas, sung by protesters to the shoppers of Woking during a 300-strong protest on Saturday 15th December. Other verses included '[Surrey Fire Service Cuts](#)', 'Less Buses Running', 'Special Needs Neglected', and more.

Raising the profile of Save Our Services in Surrey (SOSIS) and the fight to defend public services, were firefighters, nurses, social workers and carers, teachers and teaching assistants, librarians and railway workers - all stood united as public sector workers to say a resounding No to austerity and to demand a general election.

Also joining the [protest march around Woking](#) town centre were local Labour Party members, Socialist Party members, Greens, independents and a small group of Lib Dems.

Kye and Nicole, parents of little [Zane Gbangbola who died in the floods of 2014](#) were also there supporting the protest with their 'Truth About Zane' campaign and their banner which read: 'Zane Died - Authorities Lied'.

**Paul Couchman, Secretary of SOSIS, Surrey Unison and local Socialist Party organiser, said:**

"Someone is going to die because of these cuts. 'Austerity Kills' is the title of this protest because cuts kill. Whether it is cuts in the fire service, police or ambulance services meaning slower response times to emergencies, or cuts in the number of mental health hospital beds, or cuts in social care for vulnerable elderly or disabled people. Political decisions have consequences and austerity is a political choice.

"This has been a magnificent show of strength and solidarity by the Surrey trade union and labour movement. People may think Surrey is just stockbrokers and rich bankers but there are hundreds of thousands of ordinary

working class people who live and work in this county - many of whom work hard to provide our essential public services with less and less resources.

"The next steps for SOSIS will be to encourage people to participate in the council consultations over the cuts, making sure Surrey County Council knows the strength of public feeling. We will then be ready to respond to any threatened cuts to libraries, children's centres, special educational needs services (SEND), social care or any other cuts or closures.

"We will also be pulling together a people's assembly against the cuts in the new year - involving all of the local trade unions, all the opposition parties and residents and community groups - to develop a people's manifesto and budget for Surrey, based on what is needed, not what the government allows us to spend. We will then go into the next council elections demanding all candidates adopt this budget and make a stand against the cuts".

Another Christmas Carol which was ringing in the air on Saturday was: "Jingle bells, Jingle bells, Jingle all the way - What do we want for Christmas? The back of Theresa May!"

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## China's Orwellian 'social credit system' is a product of capitalism, not 'communism'

**Malachi Walusimbi-Kakembo, Southampton Socialist Party**

Over the last few years, the Chinese regime has been slowly introducing its 'social credit system'. Private companies and state-maintained 'watchers' rate citizens on their purchases and behaviour.

The stated aim is to help banks make loans - something finance capitalists find difficult in a country without a 'credit score' system, due to many people lacking bank accounts or credit histories, and with patchy enforcement against debtors.

But the dictatorship is implementing this in its characteristic repressive way - to ramp up individual surveillance, determine allocation of benefits, and even blacklist supposedly untrustworthy people from 'luxuries' such as long-distance train travel.

Some of the capitalist media outside of China have tried to present this repression as a natural extension of 'communism', but it is in fact the result of a vicious [state-capitalist dictatorship](#).

The Chinese regime is only 'communist' in name. Openly capitalist governments such as Britain's also undermine democratic rights and living conditions with alarming regularity. A comparison shows a closer similarity than the bosses' media lapdogs would like to acknowledge.

### Credit scores

While technological advances are indeed allowing the Chinese regime to exert control ever more invasively, the equivalent of the social credit system in the advanced capitalist countries - credit scores - has for years kept many people from a whole range of basic rights, such as getting a mortgage to own a home, or funding education.

Examples of financial punishment in the UK range from people [losing benefits for running a few minutes late for job centre appointments](#), to disabled veterans diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder being told they don't qualify for assistance. The basic right to employment - or to vote in the US - can also end up blocked for some who have been convicted of even small crimes.

The threats to workers are not just directly financial. No complaints have been heard from the Daily Mail and co as working-class people have been increasingly monitored and punished by the British state under Blairite and Tory governments. The British state has been forced to admit it infiltrated and attempted to undermine democratic workers' organisations [including trade unions](#) and [the Socialist Party](#). This again shows the murky and coercive nature of capitalism wherever it's found.

Increasing authoritarianism in China, just like in Britain and countries across the planet, is the capitalist establishment's response to a fear of movements to improve workers' conditions, and the threat to corporate profits and even the capitalist system itself these movements could bring. Growing struggles in China - such as the [campaign by Jasic robotics workers](#) for an independent union - have served to stoke the insecurities of the rich and powerful.

Xi Jinping's regime plays the role of gamekeeper for capitalism in China. The lengthy 'State Council Notice' released alongside the initial announcement of social credit openly said the Big Brother-style system's "main principles" should be "market-dominant" and "highlight companies' choices."

The suppression of progressive thought, most recently including the state shutting down the 'Marxist Society' at Peking University in Beijing, further indicates the wave of unrest the Chinese government foresees.

Workers in Britain still enjoy far more [hard-won democratic freedoms](#) than our brothers and sisters in China. But the Tories and Blairites, and Chinese 'Communist' Party, play the same fundamental role in trying to defend capitalism from the threat of workers' struggle.

Those western capitalist media headlines that try to paint the dystopian social credit system as synonymous with 'socialism' are a ruse. A society built on collective ownership and democratic planning of wealth would have no need to use repression against the mass of the population and our demands to enjoy a living wage and decent social benefits.

In reality, Chinese workers are fighting the same beast as we are in Britain: an exploitative economic system protected by a cold-blooded political elite.

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## The Socialist Inbox

Letters to the Socialist's editors.

### Do you have something to say?

Send your news, views and criticism in not more than 150 words to [editors@socialistparty.org.uk](mailto:editors@socialistparty.org.uk), or if you're not online, to Socialist Postbox, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD.

We reserve the right to shorten and edit letters. Don't forget to give your name, address and phone number. Confidentiality will be respected if requested.

Views of letter writers do not necessarily match those of the Socialist Party.

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## German revolution revelation

The BBC documentary on the armistice between Germany, France and Britain in 1918 revealed that one concession was made by France and Britain's rulers to the German negotiators.

France and Britain demanded large quantities of weapons from the German military as part of compensation for the war. The German negotiators said they needed weapons to defeat the rising German revolution.

The French and British rulers obliged by allowing the Germans to keep an extra 10,000 machine guns to suppress the workers.

**Pete Watson, Nottingham**

- Read more - '[1918: revolution ends World War One - and shakes the capitalist world](#)'
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## Brexit red lines

Full marks to the Socialist for an outstanding editorial on 21 November on, among other things, Brexit (see '[May's government limps on... Corbyn and unions must call urgent, mass action](#)').

Jeremy Corbyn hasn't taken a clear position on Brexit yet. He just about got away with it for last year's snap election but he can't prevaricate any more. Especially now he might become prime minister if there's a general election and he might have to resolve the mess Theresa May has left.

Some people don't think he would be able to negotiate a different deal to Theresa May. Oh yes he could!

If he made the so-called 'red lines' deep red ones - socialist demands - the EU would be terrified. He could say that a Britain moving to the left doesn't belong in a capitalist club wedded to austerity and private ownership, that Britain is leaving to build a society based on public ownership and workers' rights.

Then the bosses and bureaucrats in the EU couldn't get rid of Britain fast enough, especially if he appealed to French, Italian, German workers to take the same path. The EU would be glad to push us out of the door with the minimum of fuss, to prevent these ideas spreading.

You never know, they might even waive the £40 billion leaving fee!

**Paul Gerrard, Salford**

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## Harry Leslie Smith

The Merseyside Pensioners Association paid tribute to our esteemed comrade Harry Leslie Smith with a minute's silence followed by a loud round of applause.

Ours, the present, and future generations owe a debt of honour to Harry and his generation who lived through the most desperate times. They lived through the horrors of mass unemployment, the dread and insecurity of ill health, squalid housing, wage cuts, the cruelty of the means test, all under the stewardship of coalition or Tory governments.

As well as championing the NHS, [Harry fought the austerity still being ruthlessly implemented](#) by May and her cohorts, who surpass in their callousness even that reactionary government of the 1930s.

And history will damn those Labour councils who, without a fight, implemented those policies.

Electing a Corbyn-led government would be the greatest tribute to Harry and his generation.

**Tony Mulhearn, Merseyside Pensioners Association**

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## Flu jab jibe

The Environment Agency's monthly health and safety update reminds its workers to get flu jabs because we are vital if there's a flood or environmental incident.

But we just got a below-inflation job offer, so they don't really value us! The jobs are not offered through work, but they helpfully say they can be got for £25.

**Robert Hooper, Leeds**

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## Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

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## What the Socialist Party stands for

The Socialist Party fights for socialism – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also oppose every cut, fighting in our day-to-day campaigning for every possible improvement for working class people.

The organised working class has the potential power to stop the cuts and transform society.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

### Public services

- No to ALL cuts in jobs, public services and benefits. Defend our pensions.
- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!
- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

### Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £10 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards a real living wage. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension.
- Reject 'workfare'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage. Support the

National Shop Stewards Network.

- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

## Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low-fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

## Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.
- For the right to vote at 16.

## Mass workers' party

- For a mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Fight for Labour to be transformed into such a party: deselect the Blairites!

## Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations.
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and the banking system that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neoliberal European Union and single market. For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!

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## Audio version of this document

[To hear an audio version of this document click here.](#)

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<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/28444>

