

## Editorial of the Socialist, issue 1039

# How to save the planet?

## End capitalism; Socialist change

Courage, determination and ingenuity have been on display among the thousands of people coming together in the creative and colourful protests coordinated by Extinction Rebellion.

These characteristics will be of enormous value if we are to build the type of movement urgently needed to not only draw attention to environmental destruction but to halt and start to reverse it.

One placard's message, "I apologise but I don't know what else to do", summed up the desperate motivation of some of the protesters. Perhaps the greatest contribution is the significant questions posed by the protests about what programme, tactics and strategy are needed to secure a safe environment for future generations.

There is a growing mood for serious action and change. The [school student strikes](#) and these protests are an expression of the understanding that the Tory government is incapable of doing what is needed.

Scientists warn that time is running out. We do what we can as individuals, reusing plastic bags and recycling - and we should. But people ask: is this enough to stem the crisis?

The school students' slogan of 'system change not climate change' recognises the deep-going transformation of society that is needed. For others, however, it means arguing for change within capitalism. But capitalism is a blind, unplanned system where the only driving force is the need to maximise profits. [The change that is needed is socialist.](#)

For example, the cement industry internationally is responsible for 8% of global carbon emissions and makes fat profits for its bosses. A socialist programme would mean decisions about what gets built, and how, would be democratically made.

A socialist plan for 'green' production could include taking over the eleven million empty homes in Europe to house the homeless. It would need to include ending homes for profit by [nationalising the profiteering housebuilding corporations](#) and the banks under democratic workers' control and management.

In this way, we could build sustainably, crucially building carbon-neutral council housing. This could also create jobs with trade union rates of pay - as a step towards a democratic, socialist plan for the economy.

To really and finally stop capitalist destruction of our living standards and our planet, we need to replace this rotten system with socialism. As we go on to explain, it is the millions-strong working class that has the potential power to do that.

### Workers' action needed

Karl Marx, one of the founders of scientific socialism, wrote in [his famous work Capital](#) that: "Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the Earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations as good heads of the household".

Without doubt the current rulers of the earth's possessors, the 1% of billionaires, bankers and big business bosses, ie the capitalist class and their political representatives, are incapable of improving the earth for its

future inheritors. Instead they are selling off the family silver to the capitalists to plunder and destroy in the interests of their profits.

Capitalism is a social system based upon production for profit not social need. A 'rational' organisation of production, necessary to respond to the urgent situation, is impossible because capitalism is also a blind system. Marx's analysis showed how capitalism exploits nature, just as it exploits the working class.

Marx and his co-thinker Engels explained that when the capitalists brought the working class together in the factories and other workplaces to maximise exploitation and therefore profit it was also creating its own 'gravediggers'. It is in the workplace - first and foremost - that the working class comes into conflict with the capitalists. It's also in the workplace that workers have the basis for collective organising against the bosses. Through experience workers learned that it was necessary to link up with other sections of their class through building trade unions and also to fight for an independent political voice that represented their interests against the parties who represented the bosses.

## **Strike action**

Today the enormous potential strength of the working class is not often on display, largely due to the [failure of the trade union leaders to offer a fighting way forward](#). But when workers strike it is impossible to ignore. Extinction Rebellion (XR) were able to grind London to a halt for a few hours through audacious actions. But what are the lessons of that action and what is needed?

When London Underground workers strike, the City loses billions of pounds. In January 2003, just two train drivers, inspired by the mass movement against the Iraq war, were able to prevent the delivery of arms destined to supply troops deploying for war. What's more, workers, because of their role in production, also have the potential to organise society, to create the energy and things we need.

XR has claimed its protests are the biggest displays of civil disobedience in decades. They aim to mobilise 3.5% of the population - but that was the number of [workers on strike against austerity in November 2011](#).

And they are yet to achieve the numbers involved in the [sustained mass movement of non-payment that defeated the poll tax](#) which involved 18 million people. They were organised on a democratic local and national basis through the anti-poll tax unions to defend families against bailiffs and evictions, to frustrate the courts and ultimately to bring down the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher. Today an urgent task for the environment movement is the removal of the Tory government and its replacement by a Jeremy Corbyn-led anti-austerity government with socialist policies.

XR poses a vital question when they say that they "don't trust our government to make the bold, swift and long-term changes necessary". They demand that the government tell the truth and commit to a zero-emissions Britain by 2025.

## **Socialist planning**

However there is no basis for hoping that the crisis-ridden Tories can deliver this - they are split and paralysed, mainly by Brexit. Nor can we hope that the planet destroyers will change their ways. Instead we need an alternative. This is the idea of a socialist democratically planned and organised economy and society. To usher it in requires a movement and the urgent building of a mass workers' political voice by transforming Labour into a fighting socialist workers' party. The first step should be to deselect those Labour MPs who defend the market system.

Economic and political power must be taken out of the hands of the destroyers of the planet, the handful of capitalists who control industry and society. In Britain, this would involve the taking over of a handful of monopoly firms that control 80-85% of the economy. Compensation would be given to the ex-owners and particularly to the small shareholders on the basis of proven need. But the present horrors of capitalism will continue to exist, indeed, will be perpetuated, if this system is not replaced by socialism. We cannot control what we don't own.

Socialists are also internationalists. Environmental degradation does not recognise national borders, and an alternative requires planning on an international basis. This would provide the basis for social cooperation and human solidarity on an international level, a prerequisite for the protection of the environment and the conservation of natural resources.

There is no shortage of ways capitalist destruction of our environment impacts our lives and the future. This motivates those who have joined and supported the environment protests. Tropical forests are being decimated as profiteering agri-bosses plant mono-crops of wheat, soy, and palm oil. Some estimate that by 2050 the oceans will contain more plastic than fish. Extinction threatens more and more species. As XR puts it "catastrophic climate breakdown will cause food collapse, destroy communities, kill millions, and render many more homeless."

Now Greta Thunberg has backed the idea of a climate general strike. A general strike could give hope to millions of workers and youth and the wider population that there is a force in society capable of challenging the environmental destruction and austerity hell of capitalism - the working class. But who would organise it? It would need to be democratically organised in the workplaces and the trade unions. It is not inconceivable that the capitalist class would be forced to make concessions then, out of fear of such a movement developing and challenging their right to rule.

XR's call to arms says that: "Another world is possible, and it's just within reach. It's going to take everything we've got to get there." Most importantly it is going to take ideas of what we need and how to achieve it. Socialist ideas are still the best ideas on offer for the type of change we need. Let's organise to fight for socialism.

---

## **Northern Ireland: killing of Lyra McKee**

### **Trade union movement must act**

**Ciaran Mulholland Socialist Party (CWI in Northern Ireland)**

The killing of Lyra McKee has sent a wave of shock across the North. Lyra was only 29, but had already made a name for herself as a journalist, an author and an activist. Over 3,600 have died in the conflict, but some killings strike a particular chord.

Lyra's young age means she is of the generation which has only known the "peace" delivered by the Good Friday Agreement, signed almost exactly 21 years before the day of her 18 April death. Her activism means that for many young people she represents hope for a better future. Among trade union activists in particular, there is intense anger that Lyra was a journalist doing her job when she died.

The senseless nature of her killing has brought immense pressure onto the New IRA and the political party it is linked to, Saoradh. Saoradh is clearly under pressure, and called off its Easter Monday parade in Derry.

Despite this, most working people will have an understandable fatalism at this point - they are prepared to support protests, but do not believe that dissident groups will listen. However, the lessons from the past are that mass, united action by the working class, Protestant and Catholic, does work.

In May 1972, the Official IRA shot dead Ranger William Best, a British soldier from Creggan home on a few days' leave. A crowd of 1,500 women protested in the area the next day, and one week later the Officials called a ceasefire which marked the effective end of their armed campaign.

In 1998, a wave of protests across Ireland forced the Real IRA to call a ceasefire after the Omagh bomb.

Those who killed Lyra are also part of the generation who have grown up since the Good Friday Agreement. They were on the streets carrying guns because the Agreement has not brought the promised "peace dividend."

## Deprived

Derry is the most deprived city in not just Northern Ireland, but the UK. These conditions have driven some young people in areas like Creggan into the ranks of paramilitaries.

The trade union movement unites 250,000 Catholic and Protestant workers, and is the only body which can now provide the lead required. A mass, trade union-led campaign must oppose both the repression and the dire social conditions which drive young people into armed groups.

The Socialist Party demands jobs for all on trade union conditions, a £10-an-hour minimum wage without youth exemptions, mass building of public housing, free education, and fully funded public services under democratic working-class control.

This can check the growth of paramilitarism, ensure a new generation do not waste their lives in prison cells, and bring an end to the wasteful and senseless murder of young people like Lyra McKee.

The trade unions should now act and organise Northern Ireland-wide mass protests, demanding the New IRA and every other paramilitary not just end their armed campaigns, but disband immediately. Similar workers' action in the past led, in effect, to half-day general strikes.

But this is not enough: the sectarian political parties which lined up to condemn the killing are part of the problem, not the solution. The unions must challenge sectarian politics and politicians, and state repression, and start to build a united political voice for all working-class and young people.

And ultimately, the only way to guarantee these changes, to end poverty and dead-end jobs, and to overcome the sectarianism which blights the lives of working-class people, is through a united struggle for a socialist future, where the economy is democratically planned to provide for all, not enrich the capitalist elite.

---

## Trade unionists respond to the killing

**Anton McCabe, national executive council, National Union of Journalists (personal capacity)**

The killing of my friend and fellow union member Lyra McKee on Thursday 18 April, while out working as a journalist, has touched people in Northern Ireland.

Within hours of her killing, over 2,000 people had gathered in Derry's Creggan Estate. On Friday afternoon, over 1,000 attended a protest in Derry called by the city's trade union council and our local National Union of Journalists (NUJ) branch.

On the Saturday, NUJ members and other trade unionists organised protests in Omagh, Enniskillen, Dungannon, Strabane and Newry. A rank-and-file NUJ member took the initiative in Dungannon.

About 250 attended the rally in Omagh, called at 16 hours' notice. Some had travelled miles: one man had driven 110 miles from Dublin.

In London, union activists took the initiative of organising a vigil to coincide with the funeral. The union also organised a vigil in Dublin on Tuesday. Mid-Ulster Trade Union Council organised a vigil in Cookstown, County Tyrone, to coincide with the funeral on Wednesday.

While all deaths are tragic, Lyra's struck a chord because she was an exceptional person. She used her great gifts not just to earn a living, but to make the world a better place. She naturally empathised with the alienated young people who were rioting in Derry on Thursday.

She understood Northern Ireland's 'peace process' has left them out. As a journalist, she documented how that has not delivered for society.

One of her significant pieces of work was on suicide. She pointed out that, since the 1994 ceasefires, 4,500 have died by suicide. That's more than died in 25 years of sustained political violence.

The reaction to her death shows there is a huge resistance to going back to the years of violence. Some of the strongest condemnation came from former Republican prisoners.

The 'New IRA' has shown the bankruptcy of physical-force Republicanism. The organisation emits a persistent whiff of criminality, and of senior members being agents of the security forces.

The tribute to Lyra must be to fight for a society which she'd be proud of. The poverty and alienation of capitalism and state repression, which drive young people in desperation to riots and paramilitarism, must be answered by trade union struggle for decent jobs, homes and services for all.

A young gay woman, Lyra lived in the only part of these islands where she didn't have the right to marry the person she loved. That too must change.

In Ireland, Lyra was the third journalist killed in 23 years. Journalists are increasingly menaced internationally. Journalists and trade unionists must draw a line now, because a fourth killing can happen.

---

## **Sri Lanka: No to terrorist bombing - united workers' struggle can cut off growth of racism and division**

### **CWI reporters**

The United Socialist Party in Sri Lanka, the Tamil Solidarity campaign and the Socialist Party in England and Wales strongly condemn the atrocious attacks that took place in Sri Lanka on Easter Sunday, 21 April 2019.

Well-coordinated attacks took place in eight places, including three churches which were filling up for Easter Sunday prayers.

Apart from six sites in Colombo, famous churches in Negambo and Batticalo were also targeted. At the time of writing it is estimated that over 300 lives have been lost and over 500 people are injured.

The death toll is still expected to rise. Victims of this indiscriminate attack were from all Sri Lanka's main ethnic and religious groups - speakers of the main languages Tamil and Sinhala, and Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists as well as Christians were affected.

British, Chinese, Dutch, Portuguese, and Turkish visitors to the country also died in the attack.

It is still not clear who was behind this. No one has yet claimed responsibility. The Sri Lankan government says that the attacks were made by a "religious extremist".

It is not clear what group or which nationals were behind these mindless attacks. The prime minister has connected the killings with the attack that took place in New Zealand.

In this uncertainty, fear is gripping the country. The government has banned all social media and declared a national emergency and curfew. The army has deployed on the streets as the government continues to keep the country in a very tense mood.

The choice of places where the attacks took place and the religious extremism indicated by it has shocked all communities.

Although mass murder of this nature has never happened in the history of Sri Lanka, violent killings are not new. This year marks the tenth anniversary of the brutal end of the civil war that lasted for three decades.

Over 140,000 are said to have perished in the last phase of the war alone. The current main opposition party, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and the former president Mahinda Rajapaksa and his family were largely responsible for the genocidal killings of the Tamil minority population during the war with the LTTE (Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam) who fought for a separate nation.

The Rajapaksa clan had control over much of the state apparatus in the past, including the defense ministry.

## **Tension whipped up**

Since the end of the war in May 2009, the tension between the main three communities living in Sri Lanka has been whipped up enormously.

No concrete measures have been taken to improve the conditions for the tens of thousands of war victims. Many are still held as political prisoners. No measures have been taken to address the issue of forced disappearances or the release of military-occupied lands. Democratic rights continue to be denied.

The triumphalism unleashed by the Mahinda Rajapaksa family as soon as the war ended has strengthened nationalist Buddhist chauvinism. Although Buddhist extremism has support among only a small minority of the Sinhala majority population on the island it has been consciously promoted by the Mahinda Rajapaksa family.

Former defense minister Gotabaya Rajapaksa was directly involved in the establishment of the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), an openly racist Buddhist monks' organisation. This organisation singled out the Muslim community. Their hate propaganda has contributed to a number of attacks against the Muslim minority.

In addition, anti-Muslim feelings have been whipped up, particularly in the Eastern part of Sri Lanka where the majority of Muslims live.

Opening up such divisions is seen as necessary by those who seek to find a route back to power, who have nothing to offer the mass of ordinary people and therefore seek a power base among the right-wing groups and their supporters such as Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Gotabaya set up an organisation called Eliya for this purpose. Leading members of this organisation openly advocate hatred against other communities, particularly against the Tamil-speaking Muslims.

The expulsion of all Muslims from the north by the LTTE in the 1990s opened up wide divisions between the northern-based mainly Hindu Tamils and Muslims.

The wounds inflicted during this experience are still not fully healed. Ever since the 1915 riots against Muslims, the Muslim community in Sri Lanka has faced attacks from prejudice being whipped up by all sides and feels marginalised.

The resulting isolation and justified fear of attack contribute to a situation where self-appointed leaders have assumed enormous authority as they present themselves as a strong voice for the community.

However, this separatism has not delivered in terms of improving the living conditions for the majority of Muslims who live in dire poverty.

But such ideas, as well as world events, had resulted in the emergence of a certain far-right religious radicalism among the Muslim population. However, it is only a small minority who subscribe to such ideas, and the majority of the Muslim population object to right-wing political Islamic ideas.

It is also well-known in the past that the Sri Lankan government formed paramilitary groups and armed them in order to use them in the war against the LTTE.

Over many decades right-wing governments in Sri Lanka have found various forms of religious extremism useful to mobilise such forces and promote inter-community violence and ultimately to maintain their unstable regimes.

It is due to this history that many now suspect some sort of involvement of the defense ministry - or at least the supporters of the former defense minister in these attacks.

The senior minister Mano Ganesan admitted that Ministerial Security Division (MSD) officers had been warned a few days ago that suicide bombers were targeting politicians.

It has also emerged that many ministers and their families have made preparations to protect themselves from any possible attack that may take place.

The Sri Lankan government completely failed to warn the people of this news or make any effort to prevent the attack.

The right-wing forces have already lined up to make political capital out of these horrific killings. While pretending to stand together with all communities and preaching "unity", they are already propagating hatred.

Supporters of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are trying to capitalise on this tragedy by saying this is an attack organised by Pakistani nationals.

The well-known right-wing politician Subramaniam Swamy has already called for the return of the Mahinda family to counter ISIS. He also called for a vote for Modi to prevent any such events taking place in India.

Although the Sri Lankan government and all the right-wing parties have made calls for "peace and unity" their supporters and senior personnel are already on the rampage spreading hatred.

Personnel linked to the Gotabaya Rajapaksa-led organization Eliya made an audacious effort to contact the leading organisers of Tamil Solidarity and asked them to co-operate against "Islamic terrorism".

They claimed that it's foreign intervention. Tamil Solidarity condemns these attacks and will work with any genuine forces to defend the rights of all communities. But when Eliya representatives made the invitation TS pointed out that it is precisely the divisive politics and warmongering of Rajapaksa and his co-thinkers that has fanned the flame of religious and ethnic divide in the country, and rejected the approach.

## **Fear of retaliation**

Widespread fear exists that retaliation may take place against the Muslim minority, particularly by Buddhist extremists. The tension between Tamils and Muslims in the east can also now sharpen. Weak Sri Lankan governments have historically used ethnic and religious division to consolidate and remain in power.

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, in particular, is expected to use this incident to bring himself back into prominence, staking a claim as a valid candidate for the next presidential election.

However, in a short period of time working and poor people from all communities have shown the other powerful traditions that exist in Sri Lanka - of solidarity.

At the hospital in the predominantly Muslim populated Kalmunai, a huge crowd gathered to give blood donations for the injured victims. This was the case in hospitals in the Tamil-dominated north as well as in the Sinhala-dominated south.

Sri Lanka has a very strong history of united struggle. The United Socialist Party (USP) stands in that strong tradition and continues to fight to build a united working class struggle to win all democratic rights, including right to religion, freedom of speech and assembly, right to strike, and national rights for Tamils.

USP also argues that it is not enough to fight for democratic demands and urges for a united struggle to end the capitalist system once and for all, to establish a democratic socialist planned economy to end all oppression.

We may never know the truth of who was behind these heinous killings. But we can stand together against the very conditions that provide the breeding ground for the threat of terror attacks.

We must unit to fight for better conditions and democratic rights for all. We must oppose all scapegoating and divisive hatred propaganda.

It is only the working class and poor masses who pay the price for these terror attacks. The ruling capitalist class always use this as an opportunity to clamp down on our democratic rights and further consolidate their grip on power.

While condemning this terror we must also oppose the hypocrisy of the Sri Lankan state which itself is a terror state.

United working class action and the building of mass working class organisations, is the only thing that can protect us from future divide and escalation of divisive attacks that may happen in the future.

---

This version of this article was first posted on the Socialist Party website on 22 April 2019 and may vary slightly from the version subsequently printed in The Socialist.

---

# The striking relevance of Leon Trotsky's Theory of Permanent Revolution

**Tony Saunois, secretary, Committee for a Workers' International (CWI)**

The revolutionary movements shaking [Sudan](#) and [Algeria](#) and mass upheavals in other parts of the neocolonial world, underlines the relevance of [Leon Trotsky's](#) 'theory of permanent revolution'.

The devastating economic and social crisis in Asia, Africa and Latin America today is producing social convulsions and devastating the lives of millions.

The slaughter of millions in wars in the Middle East and Africa, the direct consequences of intervention by the imperialist powers, together with miserable economic conditions, is the reality of life on the basis of capitalism and landlordism in these countries. For millions, capitalism means, to quote the revolutionary socialist Lenin, "horror without end".

Yet the crucial question facing the masses is how to put a stop to it. In providing an answer in the countries of the neocolonial world, Trotsky's permanent revolution provides the key to understanding the class forces involved, and the programme and tasks facing the working class.

Following the events of [the first Russian revolution in 1905](#), Trotsky - who played a leading role in the capital, St Petersburg - was able to draw conclusions that brilliantly anticipated the class forces involved in the victorious outcome of the [Russian revolution in October 1917](#).

Russia then was a semi-feudal system that meant slavery for the mass of the population, who were forced to eke out an existence on narrow strips of land. In the urban centres, which had seen the rapid development of industry, the industrial working class was ruthlessly exploited and oppressed.

## 'Democratic revolution'

Russia in that period had not completed the bourgeois (capitalist)-democratic revolutions of countries like England in the 17th century and [France in the 18th century](#). The main historic tasks of these revolutions consisted in the elimination of feudal and semi-feudal relations on the land and the unification of the country into a nation-state.

These changes in social and economic relations paved the way for the eventual development of industry and the working class.

Side by side with these developments was the introduction of basic capitalist-democratic rights, including the right to vote, a free press, the election of a parliament - usually won as a consequence of long and bitter struggles by the masses. The tasks of the capitalist-democratic revolution, however, were not completed by the Russian ruling class - as they still have not been fully completed in the neocolonial world, today.

In the modern era of capitalism and [imperialism](#)<sup>2</sup>, the tasks of the capitalist-democratic revolution are also bound together with breaking from the domination of imperialism.

In the case of Russia in 1917, this was particularly centred on Anglo-French imperialism, which viewed Russia as a virtual colony, at that time.

Marxists had thought that it was more likely that the socialist revolution would first be carried through in the advanced capitalist countries, given the development of modern industry and a powerful industrial working class.

The question posed in Russia in 1917 was, what would happen should the revolution break there first, and not in Germany, France or Britain, where capitalist-democratic revolutions had already been carried through?

### **Too late, too weak**

The capitalist class in the neocolonial world came onto the scene of history too late, and was too weak and tied to imperialism to complete the tasks of the capitalist revolution.

The same issue is posed today throughout the neocolonial world. In countries like India, there remains both capitalist and feudal land relations, and even slavery. This can be seen in Brazil, despite having a capitalist class and some highly developed aspects of modern industry.

As Trotsky explained, it is a question of 'combined and uneven development' - where features of a modern capitalist economy exist side by side with elements of feudalism.

However, despite industrial and technological development in countries such as Brazil and India, they have not broken free from the domination of the major imperialist powers. They have failed to fully complete the tasks of the capitalist-democratic revolution.

Brazil's much-praised industrial development has gone into reverse and been weakened. It is now more dependent on raw materials, which account for 65% of its exports, than it was 20 years ago. The increased globalisation of the world economy has bound these countries together, even more, to the major imperialist powers.

At the same time, the working class is far stronger throughout the neocolonial world than it was when Trotsky developed his theory. This is reflected in the explosion of urban centres and cities. By 2014, for the first time, over 50% of the global population was concentrated in cities. This poses the prospect of collective class struggle.

In pre-revolutionary Russia, all trends of socialist opinion saw the main task as the completion of the capitalist-democratic revolution.

However, the Mensheviks - right-wing, reformist socialists - believed that the task of the working class was to be tied to the coat-tails of the so-called liberal wing of the capitalist class, which they saw as playing the main role in the revolution. The working class was to play second fiddle.

Although Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had not developed the ideas of the permanent revolution as Trotsky was able to do, [by the 1850s they had coined the term 'permanent revolution'](#). They used it as a means of arguing for a strategy for the revolutionary class to pursue a struggle for its own class interests and independence, and they strongly denounced the cowardly role of the capitalists.

The Mensheviks saw the revolution as a purely 'national Russian' affair. These 'Menshevik' ideas are all echoed throughout the neo-colonial world today. They relegate the question of socialism to the dim and distant future.

Instead, they emphasise the 'democratic revolution' first, to be followed by a period of capitalist development and democracy. These ideas of 'stageism' have been repeated by Stalinist parties and others on the left.

A new 'stage' has often been added recently: that it is necessary to defeat 'neoliberal capitalism' first, and only then proceed to develop a more 'humane' capitalism.

In Bolivia, the idea of a period of 'Andean capitalism' was advocated by president Evo Morales, and others, before it would be possible to begin to embark on a struggle for socialism!

When attempting to enact serious land reform or reforms for the working class, however, these ideas have always come up against the interests of the capitalists and landlords.

These classes are linked together; the landlords invest in industry and the capitalists invest in land. Both are intrinsically tied to imperialism through the banks and multinational companies. They will act in their own class interests against those of the working class and peasantry.

This has been seen, time and again, throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. It was also a feature of the [Spanish revolution and civil war](#) in the 1930s.

In the theory of the permanent revolution, Leon Trotsky was able to anticipate brilliantly how the apparent contradiction of completing the tasks of the capitalist-democratic revolution was to be achieved when the capitalist class was too weak or cowardly to do so. His prognosis was to be borne out in the Russian revolution in 1917.

## **Russia 1917**

In Russia, a newly developed force arose, which was not present in the English and French bourgeois revolutions - the industrial working class. Trotsky pointed out that the liberal capitalists were terrified that a struggle against Tsarism and the social foundations it rested upon would open the floodgates for the working class, together with the peasantry - especially the poor peasants.

They would place their own demands on the agenda of the revolution and this would bring them into direct conflict with landlordism and capitalism.

Trotsky, together with Lenin, argued that only an alliance of the working class and peasantry could carry through the capitalist-democratic revolution.

Lenin, however, expressed this in [his formula](#), "the democratic dictatorship of the working class and the peasantry". This was an 'algebraic' formula which left open the exact relationship between the working class and the peasantry, the [inadequacy of which Lenin later accepted](#).

Trotsky took it further and argued that the peasantry had never played an independent role. It must, therefore, be one of the two main classes, the working class or capitalists, which led the revolution.

But the liberal capitalist class was incapable of doing this, and so the role fell to the working class. The working class could seize power in urban areas with the support of the peasants in the rural areas.

Having taken power, the demands of the working class would inevitably push the revolution beyond the tasks of the capitalist-democratic revolution to encompass the tasks of the socialist revolution.

For this to succeed, the revolution would need to spread to the industrialised capitalist countries, particularly Germany, France and Britain where the working class had a far greater social weight in society.

This prognosis was fully borne out in the events of the Russian revolution and coming to power of the working class in October 1917. This was followed by a revolutionary wave in Europe: [Germany 1918-23](#),

Hungary 1919, Italy 1920 and the [British general strike of 1926](#).

Unfortunately, these and other revolutionary movements were defeated as a result of the lamentable role of the leadership of the mass social-democratic parties which betrayed them. This was coupled with the weaknesses and mistakes of the young Communist Parties which had emerged.

## 1905 revolution

Trotsky was able to formulate his ideas on the character of the revolution in Russia out of the experience of the 1905 revolution and class struggle.

Trotsky posed the need for the working class to enact the measures of the socialist revolution, as a prelude to the socialist revolution in the industrialised capitalist countries.

The social and class relations in the neocolonial world today are such that, with strong revolutionary socialist parties, the working class can come to power and apply again, in practice, the ideas of the permanent revolution under far more favourable conditions than those which existed in Russia in 1917.

[Events in Venezuela](#), latterly under president Maduro, have demonstrated that any government that comes to power - irrespective of professing 'socialism' - but which is not prepared to take the measures necessary to break with landlordism, capitalism and confront imperialism, will be imprisoned by a reactionary ruling class determined to defend its own interests.

The social and economic catastrophe unfolding in Venezuela is a warning to all workers and socialists. In a negative sense, it confirms Trotsky's ideas: the consequences of not applying the methods and ideas contained in the theory of the permanent revolution.

Unfortunately, the failure to eradicate capitalism and landlordism, and the absence of democratic workers' control and management, has resulted in a rolling back of most of the initial reforms and gains won by the working class during the revolution that unfolded under Hugo Chavez. A social and economic crisis now engulfs Venezuela.

Had the ideas of Trotsky been applied, and capitalism and landlordism snuffed out, the tasks of the socialist revolution could have begun to be carried through.

Linking up with the revolutionary movements sweeping Bolivia and Ecuador, at the time, had there been the introduction of a genuine system of democratic workers' control and management [in Cuba](#), then a voluntary, democratic, socialist federation of these countries could have been formed.

This could have acted as a pole of attraction to the masses of the whole of Latin America and the USA. Unfortunately, this opportunity was lost due to the failure of the leadership of the movement in these countries to understand and apply the ideas contained in the permanent revolution.

A study of this outstanding theoretical contribution by Leon Trotsky is a great assistance in helping the working class and a new generation of revolutionary socialists...

- [Read the full article at socialistworld.net](#)
- The Permanent Revolution by Leon Trotsky: [£9 from leftbooks.co.uk](#)

---

## Notes

1. Leon Trotsky, along with Lenin, was the outstanding leader of the October 1917 socialist revolution in Russia - the single greatest event in human history.

Trotsky later [fought against the degeneration of the Russian revolution](#) - due primarily to failed revolutions internationally - and its Stalinist bureaucracy.

2019 marks the 90th anniversary of Trotsky's expulsion from the Soviet Union - see '[Leon Trotsky's struggle against Stalinism](#)'

2. Imperialism, [as defined by Lenin](#), is the 'highest' or 'advanced' monopoly stage of capitalism, based on the exploitation of labour and raw materials in the colonial world and the export of finance capital.

---

## **PCS union: strikes against poverty pay and job losses - vote Yes in national pay ballot**

- Vote for Chris Baugh and Democracy Alliance in union elections

**PCS members in the Socialist Party**

### **PCS national pay ballot - one week to go**

With just a few more days to go until the PCS national pay ballot closes on 29 April, the 50% voter turnout threshold set down in the Tory anti-union laws has been reached by many branches.

Another big push is needed. A big 'yes' vote backed up with an industrial action strategy of sustained, national, group and targeted action can win a much-needed above the pay cap pay rise.

Other civil service and public sector unions should ballot their members for joint action across the public sector to end years of pay restraint.

### **PCS outsourced members fight poverty pay**

There is growing anger across Whitehall from outsourced staff working in government departments over poverty pay and Victorian-like terms and conditions. The latest group of workers to take strike action are Interserve facilities staff at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

They will strike for two days on 1-2 May over the company's refusal to negotiate with PCS on redundancies, contractual changes to pay dates, and attacks on holiday pay and sick pay.

The planned action by Interserve members follows on from strike action by Aramark and ISS cleaners at the department for Business, Energy, Industry and Skills (BEIS).

PCS members have been taking strike action since the start of the year demanding the living wage of £10.55 an hour (the Living Wage Foundation's London Living Wage) and terms and conditions comparable with civil servants.

So far Aramark and ISS have refused to meet the cleaners' demands on pay. They have been on strike three times to demand a fair wage, and are determined to continue strike action until they win.

### **HMRC's Wolverhampton office in strike ballot to save their office**

PCS members in HMRC's Wolverhampton office are being balloted for strike action and a work-to-rule to save their office from closure.

A successful vote for industrial action in Wolverhampton, and a strategy to spread the campaign to other offices threatened with closure, will also strengthen the campaign to save the HMRC Ealing office.

There has been three full days and two half days of strike action by PCS members in Ealing so far and they are currently planning their next steps. Other HMRC offices threatened with closure should follow the lead of

members at Wolverhampton and Ealing and ballot members.

## **Re-elect Chris Baugh as the PCS assistant general secretary**

The election for the PCS assistant general secretary is now well under way. Socialist Party member and incumbent, Chris Baugh, received 86 branch nominations which is by far the largest number for any of the candidates. Chris is opposed to all cuts and austerity and in support of the PCS national campaign on pay.

Chris has helped steer the union through difficult times over the removal of the check-off facility for paying union subs, cuts to facility time and attacks on members terms and conditions.

He has given unmatched support to PCS members in local and group disputes and campaigns. The election closes on 9 May. Make sure you vote for Chris Baugh and return your ballot paper in time.

Chris is the candidate supported by PCS Left Unity - the union's broad left. Socialist Party members Marion Lloyd and Dave Semple are standing for re-election to the national executive committee on the Democracy Alliance slate - supported by PCS Left Unity and the PCS Democrats. Vote for them and all other candidates on the Democracy Alliance slate.

- You can read Chris's full election statement at [chrisbaughpcs.wordpress.com](http://chrisbaughpcs.wordpress.com)
- 

## **Doncaster NHS strike to stop terms and conditions attack**

**Steve Williams, Doncaster Socialist Party**

When catering services at Doncaster and Bassetlaw Hospitals NHS Trust were privatised and taken over by the French based multinational corporation Sodexo, staff were promised, as part of the legal transfer agreement, that they would keep their NHS 'Agenda for Change' terms and conditions.

However, when Sodexo refused to match the latest NHS pay rise, anger soon turned into defiance and the demand for strike action was raised. In a spectacular show of strength, 100% of the staff who took part in the ballot that followed voted to strike.

This was on a turnout of 89.4%, showing that the Tories' punitive anti-trade union laws need not be an insurmountable barrier to workers fighting back when a determined campaign is waged.

With the strike set for 1 May, staff are determined to see things through to the bitter end. Doncaster Trade Union Council has declared its support for the strike and socialist singer-songwriter Joe Solo has written a strike song called 'Sarnies for Solidarity'.

- Please show your support by sending donations and messages of solidarity to: Doncaster District and Bassetlaw Unison Health branch, Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster, DN4 5GJ.
- 

On 17 April, 50 ISS privatised Catering staff at Barnsley hospital, members of GMB union, protested against an imposed change from weekly to a fortnightly pay cycle plus an extra week in hand. This means three weeks without any wages, unless staff take a bridging loan - which then means wage cuts for two months. GMB is currently balloting members for industrial action and a further national day of protest action is planned for 26 April.

---

# **Austerity must go! Kick out the Tories - we need a Socialist Alternative**

**Iain Dalton, Socialist Alternative candidate for Gipton and Harehills ward, Leeds**

Theresa May's zombie government is still in place, lurching from one crisis to the next but looking increasingly likely to be consigned to the grave.

Talk continues of local Tory party branches calling emergency general meetings at which they'd pass a no confidence motion in order to heap pressure on May to go.

But if May is replaced by another Tory, that will do nothing about the ongoing austerity that is blighting the lives of working-class communities up and down the country. We need a general election.

This week, newspapers gave us yet another example of the misery austerity entails. Reports show that around half of all teachers are dipping into their own pockets to provide basic materials such as paper and pens!

The local elections on 2 May provide an opportunity to strike against the Tories' austerity agenda. But despite Corbyn's anti-austerity programme, Labour councillors up and down the country have been doing the Tories' dirty work.

In my ward of Gipton and Harehills in Leeds, the leaflet for the sitting Labour councillor doesn't even mention the words 'cuts' or 'austerity'.

Leeds City Council (whose budget this year added £4.5 million to its reserves) has already been forced to u-turn on one of its cuts implemented in the latest budget - passed only seven weeks ago.

Concession prices for a number of council-run attractions went up at the start of the Easter holiday, prompting a backlash on social media from hard-pressed parents.

This joins the u-turns the council made last year on cuts to transport for special needs students and on building a free school academy on Fearnville playing fields, both of which campaigns Socialist Party members were active in.

Imagine if instead of fighting against parents, local communities and trade unionists to implement these cuts, local councillors were working together with them to fight the Tories for the funding our towns and cities need.

On the doorstep we've had a warm response to our petition for the alternative 'no-cuts' budget for the city drawn up by Leeds Trade Union Council earlier this year.

We're finding increasing numbers telling us they're no longer prepared to vote for politicians who fail to stand up for working-class communities.

This is why I'll be joining Socialist Party members up and down the country in standing to provide a socialist alternative to cuts this May.

---

## **Leicester mayoral husting: only two choices - stop the cuts or make the cuts**

**Heather Rawling , NEU member (personal capacity)**

It's a daily struggle to make ends meet for working-class people in Leicester, made worse by the cuts that the Labour council is making.

Yet at a recent mayoral hustings meeting, Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby (a 'left' in the 1970s), had the audacity to criticise the record of Liverpool's socialist Labour council in the 1980s - which was led by supporters of Militant, the forerunner of the Socialist Party.

Socialist Party member Steve Score, standing as the Socialist Alternative mayoral candidate, pointed out that Liverpool's record on building council homes back then (5,000 new homes) was without equal. The council built more houses than the rest of the country put together during its time in office, creating hundreds of jobs for local people.

Moreover, Leicester City Council in the 1980s, where Soulsby played a leading role, was one of the Labour councils that abandoned the struggle against Tory government cuts and left Liverpool to fight on its own.

Recently, Leicester City Council closed homeless shelters while giving £10 million to Travelodge to build another hotel. And yet he felt able to give a lecture on the complex needs of homeless people. I know, I have worked with some of them!

### **'Those estates'**

Tracy Woolman of the Socialist Party, in response to Conservative mayoral candidate Baroness Verma's patronising statement that she had "been to these estates and met some of the people there", said, angrily, "well I live on one of 'those estates'!"

Tracy went on to point out the problems of people living in Leicester's council estates, where life is a battle to pay the rent and bills, to clothe and feed the children, and to get doctors' appointments.

Mags Lewis of the Green Party seemed more concerned about getting a woman mayor.

But Socialist Party members pointed out that it was the policies and programme that mattered, not the gender of the politician. Who wants another Margaret Thatcher?

Lewis raised the lack of public transport in the city meant people used their cars more, contributing to pollution. But she had no solution to the current total of £150 million cuts that the Tory government has made to the council budget. A lack of public transport means that people, particularly women, are left stranded on the estates, especially at night time.

Steve called for the buses to be run by the council and for it to subsidise non-profitable bus routes. He pointed out that the council had £166 million in reserves of which only £34 million was earmarked. Some of the remainder could be used to prevent cuts, while organising a mass campaign to force this weak Tory government to reverse the cuts in spending.

There were only two options: either stop the cuts and fight for more funding or make the cuts. Only the Socialist Party clearly stood against the cuts. No other candidate had a programme to deliver on their promises.

---

## **Housing associations - stop the segregation**

The Guardian recently reported that a 'social landlord' threatened a tenant for speaking to the press about [segregated facilities for social tenants and private tenants](#) in the same housing block. Social housing tenants had to use the stairs as the lift only stopped on floors with privately owned flats. The social tenant's wife was heavily pregnant.

Reportedly, his housing association, Southern Housing, would not let him sign a permanent tenancy and warned him he would be monitored for six months. And if the landlord was not 'satisfied', he and his family

could lose their home.

It is often claimed that mixed tenure developments mean mixed communities, but some social landlords seem keener on pleasing developers and investors than creating genuine mixed communities.

Many tenants of housing associations complain that they are not listened to or are threatened. Housing association workers, organised in the Unite housing branch, also point to aggressive management and attacks on union rights.

Housing association residents are organising in individual associations and linking together those workers through SHAC - a network of housing association and coop tenants supported by the Unite housing branch.

---

## **Shac to name and shame housing bosses**

The Unite union housing workers' branch and Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC) are holding the annual Alternative Housing Awards on Wednesday 1 May. It will name and shame housing associations for poor performance as landlords and employers.

This year, the awards will be presented outside the plush Grosvenor Hotel, in Park Lane, London - a venue wrapped in wealth, exclusivity and privilege, which will be hosting the industry awards at the same time.

Housing association executives have little to be proud of. The sector collectively reported a surplus of £5 billion in 2018, while the Chartered Institute of Housing reported that 165,000 social homes have been lost to the sector over the last six years.

It's not hard to see why housing associations have lost much of their original social purpose. Top executives were paid on average over £173,000 in 2018, up 4.3% on the previous year. The highest earner was David Cowans who received almost £600,000.

Their wealth is not trickling down to their staff, whose average pay rises in 2018 were below inflation. The percentage rise in housing repairs spending also fell below the rise in executive pay.

They have little understanding of the struggle to survive faced by many of their staff, tenants or service users, nor the homeless population. Their self-interest is clear.

## **Alternative Housing Awards**

Wednesday 1 May Grosvenor Hotel,

86-90 Park Lane, London W1K 7TN

shaction.org

---

## **Audio version of this document**

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

---

## **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!

---

## **Audio version of this document**

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

---

---

<http://www.socialistparty.org.uk/articles/29024>