

ПРАВИЛА

РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ ДЛЯ



РЕВОЛЮЦИЯ!



СОВЕТСКИЙ

ПОТЯ



All books listed here are available from Left Books
 ■ leftbooks.co.uk
 ■ 020 8988 8777



■ PO Box 24697 London E11 1YD
 ■ cheques payable to 'Left Books'
 ■ bookshop@socialistparty.org.uk

■ By Leon Trotsky

1st Five Years of the Communist International (2 Volumes) £14

Wars of Intervention £4

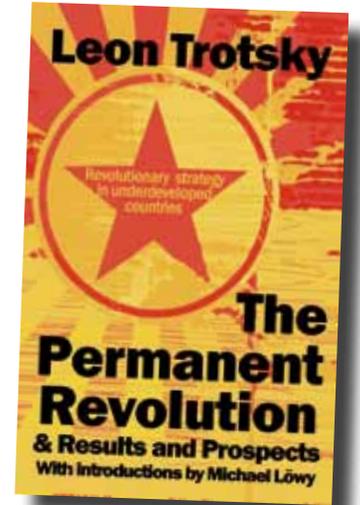
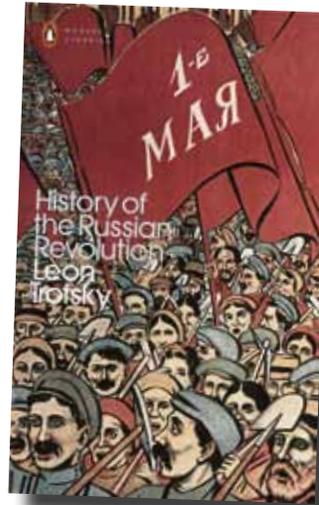
My Life £18

1905 £20

Permanent Revolution £9

History of the Russian Revolution £20

Regarded by many as among the most powerful works of history ever written, The History of the Russian Revolution offers an unparalleled account of one of the most pivotal and hotly debated events in world history. This book presents, from the perspective of one of its central actors, the profound liberating character of the early Russian Revolution.



■ Other Socialist Party publications

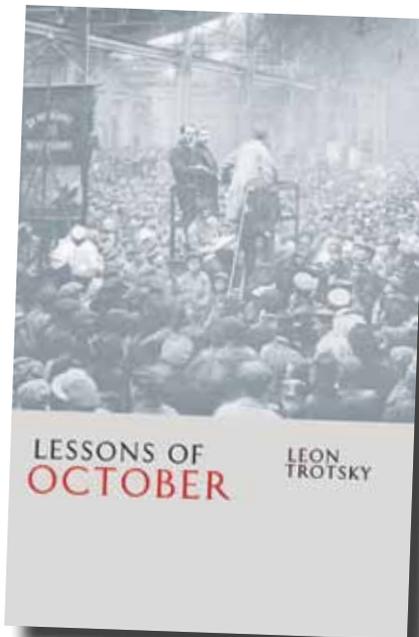
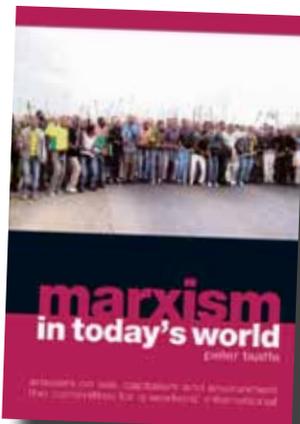
Marxism in Today's World by Peter Taaffe £8

In Defence of October by Leon Trotsky £1

Trotsky On World War One £9

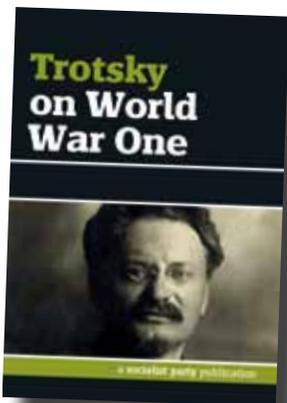
Class, Party and Leadership by Leon Trotsky 50p

Revolution 1917 £2



■ Socialist Books New Publication

Lessons of October by Leon Trotsky £5 - Writing to aid the fight for international socialism, Lessons of October provoked a series of attacks from the developing bureaucracy around Stalin, whose past mistakes Trotsky was exploring.



2017 articles from the Socialist's coverage of the Russian Revolution

See socialistparty.org.uk

- February revolution - What lessons for today?
- April - How the Bolsheviks reorientated
- July Days - Battles with counterrevolution
- How art helped make the revolution
- Lessons of the Russian revolution for women's struggle today
- Lessons from the Russian revolution for LGBT+ struggle today



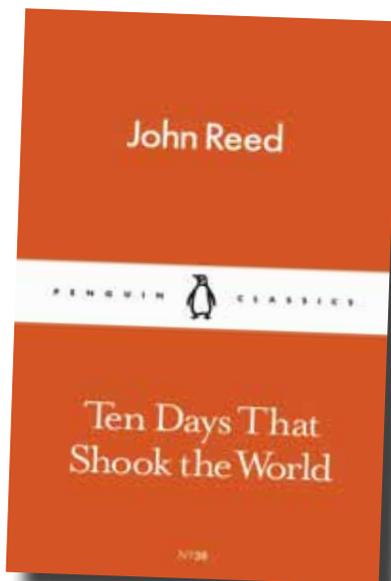
■ Other Authors

Ten Days That Shook The World by John Reed £7

This electrifying eyewitness account of the Russian Revolution, written by an American journalist in Petrograd as the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, is an unsurpassed record of history in the making.

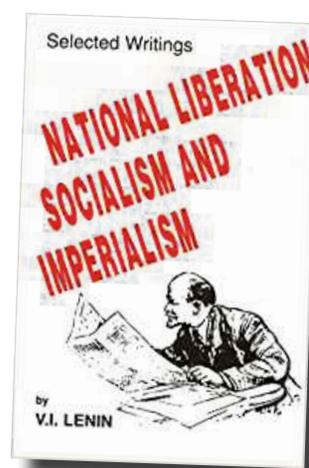
Lenin's Moscow by Alfred Rosmer £5 **Year One of the Russian Revolution by Victor Serge £18**

Documents of the 1923 Opposition £4 **Platform of the Joint Opposition 1927 £4**



■ By Lenin

National Liberation, Socialism and Imperialism £7

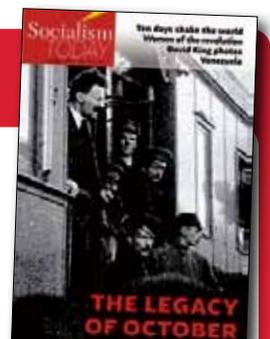


Socialism Today

The Socialist Party's magazine

October issue includes:

- **October's legacy** Peter Taaffe looks at the importance of the Russian revolution and its relevance today
- **Venezuela** Facing the capitalist offensive



£3 including postage: **Socialism Today** PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Subscribe for £25 a year at socialismtoday.org

Russia, October 1917



WHEN WORKERS TOOK POWER

Hannah Sell
Socialist Party
deputy general secretary

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

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

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

October 1917, when the working class, led by the Bolshevik Party, successfully took power and began to establish real work-

ers' democracy, is the greatest event in human history to date. For the capitalist class it is vital that the lessons of it are buried.

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

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

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

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

Today, however, when capitalism so clearly means aus-

terity for the majority, there is a growing interest in socialist ideas, and a growing fear among the capitalist elite that their rule could once again be threatened.

Opportunities

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

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

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

In the Portuguese revolution of 1974, the capitalist state disintegrated.

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

Why did the working class

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

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

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

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

United front

The counterrevolution came when the tsarist General Kornilov attempted, under the cover of the Kerensky government coalition, to drown the revolu-

tion in blood with a march on Petrograd. He was defeated by the most effective 'united front' in history to date.

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

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

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

This was a key moment in the growing and increasingly implacable support of the masses for the Bolshevik Party. Testing

■ Continued overleaf

Continued from previous page them in action they were discovering them to be the only party that genuinely represented their interests.

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

Growth

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

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

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

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

Contrary to the belief of some today who rightly want to see a revolution and imagine that this will be achieved by appearing as 'radical' as possible at every stage, the Bolsheviks prioritised

“”
Revolutions are always a process, developing over months or years. Events in the Russian revolution were exceptionally compressed because of the urgency of ending the horror of World War One

patiently explaining their ideas, confident that they would win the working class on the basis of experience.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The existence of such conditions does not, however,

October 1917: When workers took power



automatically lead to the working class taking power. Many times, before and since, the opportunity has been missed as a result of inadequate leadership.

Timing

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

Driven into hiding in Finland by the murder threats of the July days, Lenin was writing to the Bolsheviks urging them to lead

the revolution because the fate of Russia could be decided in two or three days.

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

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

Fearful of missing the oppor-

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

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

Kerensky's government was

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

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

This was only possible, however, because of the existence of the

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

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

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

Democracy

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

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

This young, democratic workers' state achieved an enormous amount. It degenerated, not because of any inherent weakness in Marxism, but because of its

“”
The revolution brought into being a state that was far more democratic than the most 'democratic' capitalist country

isolation. From the beginning the Bolsheviks had seen the Russian revolution as the first step in a European and world revolution.

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

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

Today

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

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



- 1905 revolution** The 'dress rehearsal' for 1917.
- 1912** The Bolsheviks became a separate revolutionary party in contradistinction to the reformist Mensheviks.
- 1914** World War One. Inter-imperialist rivalries spill over into armed military conflict in Europe. Kaiser Russia links up with British and French imperialism and against German imperialism and its allies. Mass slaughter of troops and widespread suffering of civilians.
- 23 February 1917** On International Women's Day (8 March in the Gregorian calendar), low-paid women textile workers take to the streets of Petrograd demanding bread - later joined by other factory workers. Spontaneously the February revolution begins.
- 27-28** Troops mutiny against the tsar. Petrograd and Moscow soviets of workers' and soldiers' deputies formed.
- 3 March** Tsar Nicholas II abdicates. The Provisional Government is inaugurated, headed by Prince Lvov.
- 5** The Bolsheviks' paper, Pravda (Truth), is published in Russia for the first time since it was banned in July 1914.
- 2 April** Lenin, Zinoviev and other Bolsheviks arrive from exile at Finland Station, Petrograd, to a huge welcome.
- 4-11** These - denouncing the capitalist Provisional Government and calling for a workers-led socialist revolution. Initially in a minority, Lenin wins round Bolshevik party.
- 24-28** An All-Russia Bolshevik Party conference overwhelmingly approves the transfer of power to the soviets.
- 17 May** Trotsky returns to Russia after being imprisoned by the Mezhraimnitsy (the Inter-District Organisation of which Trotsky is a leader) to join the Bolsheviks.
- 3 June** The first All-Russia Congress of Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies begins in Petrograd, dominated by the Social Revolutionary (SRs) and Mensheviks who support the Provisional Government, with the Bolsheviks and SRs to win over the Bolsheviks in a demo backdrop. Up to 500,000 march in Petrograd demanding all power to the soviets! - and 'down with the war' offensive!
- 2 July** The Kadets Constitutional Democrats, the main capitalist party withdraw from the Provisional government leading to the political instability.
- 3-5** The July Days. Soldiers, sailors and workers in Petrograd against government to deliver bread, peace and land - calling on the Provisional Soviet to take power. Their demands, however, are in advance of the rest of Russia.
- 18** Attempt by the Bolsheviks and SRs to turn the masses against the Provisional Government, with the Bolsheviks and SRs to win over the Bolsheviks in a demo backdrop. Up to 500,000 march in Petrograd demanding all power to the soviets! - and 'down with the war' offensive!
- 4 July** 500,000 demonstrate in Petrograd. The government intend a brutal crackdown, with 400 casualties in the capital. The printing HQ seized and Lenin forced into hiding.
- 5** Lenin, Zinoviev and Alexandra Kollontai, among others, are indicted for state treason. The same laws are used to arrest Trotsky on 23 July.
- 24** Kerensky and SR ministers are destroyed. The Bolshevik coalition, now prime minister and war minister, forms a new place. It agrees to fuse with the Mezraimnitsy.
- 27** Reactionary general Kornilov moves troops near to Petrograd in an attempted coup, aided by British army personnel and vehicles.
- 27-30** Under the guidance of the Bolsheviks - seven though they are in a minority - the Military Revolutionary Committee in Petrograd organises the defence of factories and workers' districts. Kornilov's troops are recruited. Rail workers rip up track or reroute Kornilov's retreat.
- 31** The Petrograd Soviet votes for the transfer of power to the working class by an overwhelming majority.
- 4 September** Trotsky is released from Kresty prison.
- 11** The Moscow Soviet unanimously condemns the state repression of the soviets. The Black Sea Fleet adopts the slogan 'power to the soviets', as do 23 regiments of the 23rd Army.
- 24** Kerensky forms the third coalition government. Kornilov is Menshevik and SR ministers.
- 25** Trotsky elected chair of the Petrograd Soviet.
- 10 October** The Bolshevik Central Committee agrees to prepare for armed insurrection to overthrow capitalist regime and transfer power to soviets. Zinoviev and Kamenev vote against and later publicly break plans.
- 24-26 October** Trotsky and the Military Revolutionary Committee organise taking the sites in Petrograd and capture the Winter Palace, the seat of Kerensky's regime. No bloodshed, indicating overwhelming support for revolution.
- 25** Overwhelming majority of delegates to second All-Russia Congress of Soviets endorse transfer of power to the soviets.
- 26** Soviet government is inaugurated with Lenin chair of people's commissars. Fighting in Moscow as counter-revolutionaries are defeated. Soviet power begins to be established throughout Russia.

'MORE BRIGHT THAN ANY HEAVEN'

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



Non-fiction: Ten Days That Shook the World

INSPIRATIONAL PLATFORM FOR REVOLUTION'S NAMELESS VOICES

Ian Pattison

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He recalls a crowd of revolutionary sailors' run-in with the rail union, the Vikzhel, led by the right. "A member of the Vikzhel was pleading with them. 'Comrades, we cannot carry



John Reed

was not the only tyrant in the world; capitalism was worse, and in all the countries of the world capitalism was emperor."

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

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

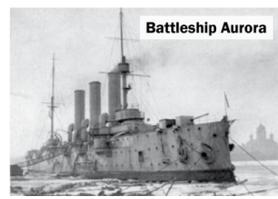
"It was exactly 10.35 when Kameney asked all in favour of the proclamation to hold up their cards. One delegate dared to raise his hand against, but the sudden sharp outburst around him brought it swiftly down."

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

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

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

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



Battleship Aurora

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

Anoushka Alexander

■ 'Ten Days That Shook the World' is airing on BBC Radio 4 and available on iPlayer

Film: Reds

FLAWED BUT INFORMATIVE BIOPIC OF REVOLUTIONARY JOURNALIST REED



Scott Jones

The 1981 film 'Reds' about the American socialist journalist John 'Jack' Reed is not the movie version of 'Ten Days That Shook the World'. It dedicates too little of its three-hour 20-minute running time to the events of 1917.

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

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

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

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

At first he is reluctant. He is a journalist, with no relevant "credentials" as he puts it - but the workers urge him to speak, saying "everyone has credentials." Reed gets up and tells

the workers that if they strike, then American workers will join them.

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

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

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

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

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



Debates include: WHAT IS THE LEGACY OF THE 1917 OCTOBER REVOLUTION?

a weekend of political discussion and debate on socialist ideas to change the world

SOCIALISM 2017
Institute of Education, London WC1H 0AL
on 11&12 November

invited speakers to debate with us include Orlando Figes, Robert Service and Simon Sebag Montefiore who have all been on the BBC attacking the Russian revolution in a most childish way.
socialism2017.net
10% discount off on day & weekend tickets: BOOK NOW!

Film: October

REVOLUTIONARY POINTER TO THE FUTURE OF CINEMA AND SOCIETY

Ben Robinson

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

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

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

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

The wavering of the ranks of the army - to defend the old order, or to join the masses in building a new one - is painted across the screen.

When the state fights back, the rifles firing at the workers are intercut with scenes of the tsarist press - both aiming to maintain the interests of the elite.



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

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

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

Even recut and changed, as with much revolutionary art, it fell out of official favour, replaced with dull, placid 'socialist realism'. The recently restored version of October, premiered in Berlin in 2012 and including Trotsky, stands as a testament to the time, and a pointer to the future of cinema and society.

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

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

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

Virtually no mention of Trotsky. The only mention of the civil war was when

it started and when it ended. And Lenin only became a revolutionary because the capitalists wouldn't give his mother a lift to see his brother's execution.

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

Jimmy Tyson
■ 'The Russian Revolution' is available on netflix.com

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

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

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

Ranged against them? Tariq Ali and China Miéville. Call it balance if you want. A relentless focus on psychology at the expense of an understanding of mass movements - Trotsky's arrogance, Lenin's desire for revenge for his brother's death!

To paraphrase Lenin: when everyone is a psychologist, no one is a psychologist. These were utterly self-sacrificing men. Lenin did, yes, die of a stroke, but not before he took a bullet. And we know what happened to Trotsky. An entirely predictable travesty.
Paul Gerrard

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

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

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

Alison Hill
■ Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party, responds to the BBC's attempt to smear the revolution: socialistparty.org.uk/videos
■ 'Russia 1917: Countdown to Revolution' is available on BBC iPlayer