

On the 90th anniversary of the Russian Revolution: the prospects for socialism in the twenty-first century

On October 25 (November 7 by the Western calendar) the Russian working class, under the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, took power, establishing the first ever workers' state. This extraordinary achievement, which "shook the world" to its very foundations, was the product of decades of political and theoretical struggle within the Russian and international revolutionary movement. It was, without a doubt, the greatest political event of the twentieth century, and it profoundly affected the subsequent course of history.

Nearly three quarters of a century later, in December 1991, the Soviet Union finally collapsed. This was hailed by defenders of capitalism the world over—politicians, pundits and academics alike—as the failure of socialism and communism; even, as one writer put it, "the end of history".

But the demise of the USSR was the result, not of socialism but of Stalinism—the reactionary nationalist program of "socialism in one country" adopted by Joseph Stalin and the bureaucratic regime he came to lead, based on the rejection of the internationalist program and principles that had animated the October Revolution under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky.

How and why did Stalinism emerge? Was it the inevitable result of the revolution itself? Or did the betrayal of the revolution, and the eventual murder of all of its finest representatives, including Leon Trotsky, arise out of a series of complex historical conditions—above all, the isolation of

the first workers' state following the defeat of a series of revolutions in Europe and China—that must be seriously examined in order to understand this immense and vital strategic experience of the international working class?

Ninety years on, what is the relevance of the Russian Revolution to the situation confronting ordinary working people today?

The events of 1917 were triggered by the breakdown of world capitalism, expressed in the outbreak of World War I and the unparalleled carnage that followed, as each of the great powers of the day sought to carve out for themselves markets, resources and spheres of influence against their rivals.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the working class stands on the precipice of another world conflagration, this time caused by the historic economic, social and political decline of the United States, and its attempt to assert its world domination through military means against its rivals in Europe and Asia. Militarism and war again threaten mankind, with potentially catastrophic consequences.

Nick Beams, Socialist Equality Party national secretary and the SEP's leading candidate for the Senate in NSW, will address SEP election campaign meetings in Sydney, Perth and Melbourne on these critical issues. He will review the historical significance of the Russian Revolution and outline the revolutionary socialist perspective of the International Committee of the Fourth International today.

Wednesday November 21, 7.00 p.m.

North Melbourne Library

66 Errol Street, North Melbourne

Tickets: \$3 and \$2 concession

For more information call 03 9329 7711 or email sep@sep.org.au

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