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THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEAS OF LEON TROTSKY

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For decades, the mega rich the world over have tried to smear the ideas of socialism using the legacy of the viciously anti-democratic and grotesque Stalinist regime which emerged in the Soviet Union in the early 20th century. The capitalist class, who have ruled over the deepest economic and social crisis the world has seen since the 1930s, desperately fumbles to cast aspersions over the idea of a political alternative to their crisis ridden system.

Is their version of events – that socialism is a totalitarian, anti-democratic monstrosity - really true? Was what emerged in the USSR genuine socialism? Did the regimes which developed across Eastern Europe in the mid-20th century have anything in common with the ideas of Marx and Engels, or Lenin and Trotsky, the initial leaders of the October revolution in Russia in 1917?

Led by the Bolsheviks, including Lenin and Trotsky, the October 1917 revolution in Russia was the result of the heroic efforts of the Russian working class. By building a mass, democratically organised and peaceful movement, they for the first time in human history ended the rule of a privileged minority over the impoverished masses, and began to build a new socialist society.

Revolution and counter-revolution

Tragically, the story doesn't end there. Petrified at the idea of global revolution, a concerted campaign of sabotage by world capitalism against the Russian working class soon followed, including the invasion of 21 pro-capitalist armies to drown the October revolution in blood. The widespread

destruction caused by the war laid the basis for the wrenching of democracy from the hands of the Russian masses by a bureaucracy which found its figurehead in Joseph Stalin.

Trotskyism

But was this inevitable? Led by Leon Trotsky, the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union fought to their deaths against the rise of Stalinism in defence of the ideas of genuine socialism, at the heart of which sits the principles of workers' democracy and democratic workers' control and management of the economy, as well as international struggle by the working class for global socialist revolution.

As such, while the Russian revolution was betrayed and dictatorship and bureaucracy took a stranglehold in the Soviet Union, Trotsky and his ideas of democratic socialism and internationalism were a beacon to all those fighting capitalism, fascism, and Stalinism in the 1930s. In fact, Trotsky's ideas were such a threat to Stalin's dictatorial, murderous, and repressive rule that he was brutally murdered by one of Stalin's agents in 1940.

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In 2018, as the crisis of capitalism continues unabated, many workers, young people and students struggling around the world are questioning how they can fight for a new type of society, and looking towards Trotsky's ideas as part of this. Join Socialist Students as we discuss and debate how Leon Trotsky's ideas can help us to transform Britain and the world in 2018.