



# tubeworker

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## 100 YEARS SINCE THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION WORKERS CAN WIN POWER

### WORKPLACE NEWS AND STORIES ON THE BACK!

In October 1917 the working class took power in Russia. Although this is often described as an undemocratic coup, *Tubeworker* believes that democracy was at the heart of the events that brought the working class to power in 1917. How did they do it?

In 1917 Russia was still an autocracy ruled over by a monarch, the Tsar. In contrast, the capitalist class and the ruling regime were weak. The Tsar was unpopular. The peasants wanted land. The people were war-weary. Russia's participation in World War One had cost around 3.6 million soldiers' lives by late 1916.

#### The February Revolution

In late February 1917, women in the capital, Petrograd, protested against food queues and sparked strikes that demanded, "down with autocracy" and "down with the war".

These grew into a general strike. Thousands of workers demonstrated in the streets. When asked to shoot the demonstrators, the troops rebelled and shot their officers. With the state forces refusing to cooperate the Tsar was vulnerable. He resigned on 2 March.

#### The soviets and workers' democracy

During the last days of the February revolution, socialists put a call out for a soviet to be formed in Petrograd. Soviets were councils, elected by workers, soldiers and peasants.

Soviets were places of debate and democratic decision-making and, ultimately, of power. By the end of March 1917 the Petrograd soviet had almost 3,000 delegates. By October 1917 there were 1,429 across Russia.

In 1917, workplace democracy flourished. Workers set up factory committees that organised to "democratise factory life". Workers agitated for control over production. They challenged the dictator-like power that bosses wield in capitalist workplaces: in some places workers took decisions, such

as hiring and firing, normally made exclusively by management. Participation in strikes soared; 2.4 million workers struck between March and October.

#### The Provisional Government

The February revolution handed political power to a Provisional Government, which in many ways continued the old regime.

It was never elected. It maintained Russia's participation in World War One. In reality, the Petrograd soviet held power in the capital because it controlled the barracks and the troops.

In the summer, the government asked General Kornilov, military commander in chief, to enforce stability by introducing martial law in Petrograd. However, in late August, Kornilov himself launched a military coup against the government with the aim of undoing the February Revolution. Armed workers and soldiers defeated Kornilov's attempted coup. Telegraph workers prevented leaders in Petrograd from communicating with the advancing troops. Rail workers stopped trains, and ripped up tracks to block communication.

#### The Bolsheviks

The Bolsheviks were one of many factions/parties who participated in political debate and activity.

They stood in elections to be delegates in the soviets. They published newspapers and industrial bulletins (like *Tubeworker*!) and submitted motions to the soviets so that their ideas could be debated.

#### The October Revolution

The Bolsheviks had gained popularity by playing a prominent role in defeating Kornilov. Their call for a revolution was winning support.

In late September the Bolsheviks won leadership of the Petrograd Soviet. By October, the Bolsheviks were elected leaders in the majority of workers' soviets of most industrial cities and in most soldiers' soviets in garrison towns.

On 24 October pro-soviet soldiers took control of Petrograd's key roads and bridges. The capital effectively passed

into the hands of the soldiers who were defending their soviets. The government could only find a handful of troops willing to serve it. On 25 October government leader, Kerensky, fled and the October insurrection defeated the Provisional Government.

The workers' government that came out of the October revolution had a Bolshevik majority. In its first days it delivered what the Provisional Government had avoided for eight months: land to the peasants and an end to the war. Further decrees on workers' rights, women's rights, and the rights of oppressed nationalities followed. The working class, led by the Bolsheviks, was in charge.

#### What went wrong?

*Tubeworker* believes that Stalinism, the barbaric social system that arose as the Revolution was battered by war and social backwardness, represented the overthrow of the Russian Revolution, rather than its continuation.

It was not an inevitable outcome of 1917, and does not invalidate the democratic character of October 1917 and the government it installed.

### WHY THE REVOLUTION IS RELEVANT TODAY

Capitalism couldn't fix the crisis it had caused in 1917.

Today's working class faces its own crisis, which our bosses and government won't fix: high rents, low wages, insecure work, benefit cuts. We need a government committed to the working class, not the capitalist class.

The analysis and approach to the state developed by Lenin and the Bolsheviks is also key. The February and October revolutions won when elements of the armed state (police and army) broke away and sided with the workers instead of the government. Police attacked picket lines in the 1984 miners' strike. Cleaning companies used the police to break up cleaners' demonstrations against the biometric booking on system. Cleaning companies have also used immigration police against cleaners during strikes.

**We need to confront the state!**

## CLEANERS' COLUMN



Cleaners demonstrate for justice outside City Hall on 12 October

As we all know, ABM has taken over cleaning contracts on London Underground from September, and is continuing to transfer staff through TUPE regulations.

Interserve staff have already transferred, with Vinci staff due to go over in early December, followed by ISS staff in February.

The contract was sold to the lowest bidder, with some reports indicating that ABM underbid rivals Interserve and Mitie by £4 million. There are question marks over whether ABM really has the infrastructure to properly oversee a contract of this size; it emerged that they were using an agency office as a base for conducting "right-to-work" checks with staff, despite having their own office off Borough High Street.

Their booking-on systems seems to be all over the place, leading to a recurrence of the short-payment issue in the first weeks of the contract. Some staff have not been issued with adequate PPE. The union is taking these issues up at senior level. The system for reporting sickness also seems to be a mess.

It all points to a firm not capable of running the contract. We took our campaign to City Hall on 12 October to demand an end to outsourcing; the only company that should be employing cleaners on London Underground is... London Underground!

### 4 DAY WEEK 4 WHO?

Night Tube drivers are disappointed to see that the opportunity to work a four-day week is only available to drivers who currently work five days. Why not to Night Tubers too? Some drivers want to step up, as well as step down, their working days.

*Tubeworker* has heard that a further trial may follow, allowing Night Tubers to move to a three- or four-day week. While this would be welcome, it wouldn't be the first time that part-timers have been dealt with as a second priority or even an afterthought.

### SEEING RED (TABARDS)

Apparently staff aren't "visible" enough on stations (could it be because hundreds of jobs have been cut?).

To ameliorate this, LU is trialling the use of red tabards (emblazoned with "here to help") at certain locations.

Unions raised several safety concerns, such as the fact that the tabards don't have adequate velcro fastenings. Unions also objected to the fact that there was no proper consultation.

*Tubeworker* reminds all readers that participation in the trial is voluntary, and encourages readers not to participate. The real way to make station staff more visible is to increase the staffing level!

### PAIN IN THE ART?

A recent "Art on the Underground" installation at King's Cross, by the Met/H&C gateline featured a looped 12-minute film, with a soundtrack featuring high-pitched singing throughout.

No risk assessment was carried out. Staff found the noise intolerable. Additionally, disabled member activists within the union flagged up the problem of sensory over-stimulation that could make the workplace a more distressing environment for workers with certain mental health conditions.

After union reps encouraged a campaign of email bombardment to the Area Manager, an agreement was reached whereby the film would only be played between 08:00-10:00 and 17:00-19:00 daily.

If something similar happens in your workplace, speak to your safety reps immediately.

### STAY ANOTHER DAY?

Management want to move some engineering staff from Cody Road (in E16) to Lillie Bridge, over in West Kensington. That's 50 minutes travelling time away.

While management hide in their bunkers pushing us around like plastic figures on a wartime map, we confidently expect our union reps to insist that this ridiculous move is stopped.

### NEW DISPUTE ON NIGHT TUBE

RMT has declared a new dispute with LU over issues affecting Night Tube drivers.

A previous dispute secured an agreement from LU that Night Tube drivers would be given fair opportunities to progress into full-time roles. However, LU has reneged on this.

RMT is fighting for a process that allows Night Tube drivers who want to go full-time to do so, as well as protecting the valuable promotional pathway from stations into full-time driver roles.

### DANNY DAVIS: BACK ON THE FRONT!

The Director's Review into the sacking of Danny Davis has concluded that he will be reinstated with a guaranteed job as a train driver from 12 months after the date he was sacked. He is already about six months into that period.

This is a great win for workers' solidarity. What forced this climb down from the company was the thumping majority for strikes secured by RMT Central Line drivers.

The campaign in the depots has been exemplary. Workplaces were plastered with propaganda and communication, making sure everyone knew the facts of the case. Members were engaged and encouraged to take an active role, speaking to friends and colleagues to raise the profile of the case and ensure everyone returned their ballot papers. The leadership of workplace reps across Central Line depots was key.

The lesson for all of us, wherever we work and whatever our grade, is that solidarity is our best weapon. When we stand up and say that we will not let the bosses ride roughshod over us, whether on an individual basis or collectively, and back that up with votes for strikes, we can force the employer back.

*Tubeworker* extends our congratulations to Danny and all reps, activists, and members at Central Line train depots for a battle well fought.

### What is *Tubeworker*?

*Tubeworker* is a rank-and-file socialist bulletin, published at least monthly, written by Tube workers, for Tube workers. It is published by the socialist group Workers' Liberty, but is produced in editorial meetings open to all workers. Supporters from outside London Underground can help with public distribution.

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