

Workers and youth speak about the relevance of the Russian Revolution today

Our correspondents
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Members of the audiences at the Socialist Equality Party lectures, “The Historical and Contemporary Political Significance of the Russian Revolution,” and screenings of *Tsar to Lenin* in Melbourne and Sydney spoke with the WSWs after the events.

Wel, an international relations student at Victoria University, purchased a DVD copy of the documentary to show his family. “The meeting was informative and intriguing,” he said. “Nick Beams talked about the Egyptian revolution today. If you compare it to the Russian Revolution, it’s similar. In the film *Tsar to Lenin* you can see the same scenes as happened in Tahrir Square—people were celebrating.

“The difference is that in Egypt they didn’t have a clear leader or party. It was hijacked by elements like the Muslim Brotherhood. I’d heard about the Tsar in Russia, but nothing else about the Russian Revolution.”

Jose, a quality assurance officer, said the lecture had provided “an interesting assessment of the [global financial] collapse in 2008 and now it’s getting worse. The conditions are not the same as those that provoked the Russian Revolution, but it’s probably building to that point.

“I believe the instrument in the Russian Revolution was the Bolsheviks,” Jose said. “The power is the people, but they need to have an instrument. A car cannot move without a driver and you always need that driver to take the car to a certain destination or in a particular direction.

“What I can see globally is that social benefits such as health and education are being cut. The rich don’t want people to have an education. They prefer to have people with limited knowledge.

“History is written by the people who win wars, but not necessarily by the people who are right. There are writers who are tarnishing Leon Trotsky’s real record.

The people who are writing the history, hide the truth because it may affect their interests. They don’t want the system they have built up to be demolished or destroyed.”

Teresa, a health worker, attended the Melbourne lecture and film showing with her two grandchildren. “I found the words in the film by the narrator a bit outdated, but I think there is definitely a relevance between the economic and social conditions portrayed in the film and today,” she commented.

“I work in disabilities and mental health, and the wages are very low. If you are a casual, you have no holidays or no sick pay. It is a very oppressive regime to work under. You have no security and there is no option for you to get a car or a house.

“I think that fighting for a party in the working class and the socialist perspective that you are talking about is a step forward. I have no connection with politicians at all. I don’t like anything they stand for. They do not inspire me. I think what Nick Beams was talking about is relevant not just to here but everywhere. It is a message that needs to be spread about the capitalist system and how it works.”

Sarwan, 17, has just finished high school. He came to the Sydney event with his friend **Bakri**, 18.

Sarwan said: “The lecture really helped to give a broader understanding of what it is that we are actually struggling for when one claims to be a socialist and what socialism could actually be like one day. The struggle of the lower classes is timeless, so it’s always going to be relevant, no matter which time you live in. As long as there’s capital, there’s going to be a need for revolution.

“I guess for the revolution to be successful it would have to be worldwide and in order for it to be worldwide, the international boundaries and ideas of

nationalism need to be abolished completely. There needs to be a unity among the working class of all nations.”

Bakri said: “I think we got a better understanding of socialism than before we came in. The video really helped and taught us a lesson in the historical value of the Russian Revolution of 1917. When I first saw the title, I thought ‘how’s a revolution in 1917 going to have any effect on anything happening now?’ But after seeing the video and seeing them getting rid of capitalism, Lenin’s ideals really do relate to today.

“You can see in the film that it required a double revolution. It’s similar to contemporary issues. The first thing that came to my mind was Egypt. They had the first revolution where Mubarak was brought down, but then Mursi came up and gave himself all this power. There needs to be another revolution.”

Jordan, a 19-year-old IT student attending his first Socialist Equality Party meeting, said: “After reading the WSWS regularly I thought it would be interesting to attend a meeting and hear directly from the people behind the SEP. I wanted to find out more about the relation between history and the future of our current economic and political systems.

“I learned a lot about the Russian Revolution from the lecture and the film, and about the contradiction between the global economy and the way politics works today, with the division of the world into nation-states. Something that particularly caught my attention was the idea of technology—that we have all the resources necessary to implement advanced political systems and true democracy.

“I definitely see that the Russian Revolution has a contemporary relevance. Almost 100 years ago workers were fighting for their rights against the Tsarist dictatorship, and as it was said in the lecture, the political systems we have in place now resemble those of a dictatorship. People of the working class are having their workplace rights taken away. A century later, we are facing similar concerns and struggles.”

Kirlie and **Georgie** travelled to the Sydney meeting from Newcastle, an industrial city 160 kilometres to the north.

Kirlie said she had attended “because I didn’t know anything about socialism, and people were talking about ‘Trotsky’, so I thought I had better learn something about him. I learned about the Russian

Revolution today. I’ve always been an idealist and believed that the people have the power, which is a hard belief in modern times when people aren’t empowered at all. This revolution did prove that people can have power. What I got from the movie was that we don’t have to settle for war and poverty, we can choose something else. We can make that decision.”

Georgie said: “I had heard about this film for years, so I finally came down to watch it. I learned how important a figure Trotsky was in the revolution, the huge involvement he had, and the pure dedication. It’s hard to contemplate it these days—people so dedicated to a cause—and so it was really good to see that kind of empowerment coming through. We are still living in an arena of exploitation. The degrees are different but it’s a very contemporary message.”

Justin, a Year 11 high school student, said the film had shown that millions of people had carried out the Russian Revolution. “As Nick Beams said, the revolution was not just an event, but the beginning of a new epoch—the opening for other revolutions to occur around the world by the poverty-stricken people. All the workers were standing up together against the elites, and striving to get rid of classes. The film also showed that the White armies that tried to overturn the revolution were backed by the foreign powers, and that the Red Army was led by Leon Trotsky.”

Justin, whose family came from Vietnam, commented on the history of the film itself, with the initial screenings of the movie in the 1930s shut down as a result of pressure from the Stalinist regime. “Stalin did not want the film to be shown because it showed Leon Trotsky as a leader of the revolution,” he said.



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