

The significance of British comedian Russell Brand's call for revolution

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English comedian and actor Russell Brand has come under sustained attack by a variety of political scoundrels.

For urging people not to vote and calling for a “revolution”, Brand has been catapulted to the position of Public Enemy Number One as far as a rogues’ gallery of apologists for capitalism and the Labour Party are concerned.

Brand’s politics are confused. He has uncritically supported a variety of middle class protest movements such as “Occupy” and Anonymous and has been keen to stress that his concept of revolution is one based on transforming the way people think. But right is wholly on his side and against his detractors.

Brand was asked to edit an edition of the *New Statesman* magazine. In an editorial he praised the formation of “the NHS, holiday pay, sick pay, the weekend” as “the left’s great legacy” before declaring, “We British seem to be a bit embarrassed about revolution, like the passion is uncouth or that some tea might get spilled on our cuffs in the uprising. That revolution is a bit French or worse still American. Well, the alternative is extinction so now might be a good time to re-evaluate”.

This prompted an interview on *BBC Newsnight* conducted by the ever-obnoxious Jeremy Paxman, who berated Brand for not voting and said that because of this no one should listen to him.

Brand replied, “It is not that I am not voting out of apathy. I am not voting out of absolute indifference and weariness and exhaustion from the lies, treachery and deceit of the political class that has been going on for generations”.

Politicians, he added, were only interested in “serving the needs of corporations”, and a socialist system based on equality was needed.

The response was visceral, with Conservative MP Michael Fabricant saying of Brand, “what a twat”. The self-satisfied and morally bankrupt pro-Labour left was yet more incensed that Brand could declare all politicians and parties to be the same creatures of the corporations.

Emmett Rensen proclaimed in *Policy Mic*, “If you fail to mitigate the suffering of even one person by refusing to cast a vote every chance you get, you aren’t refusing complicity in an evil system—you’re becoming complicit in evil”.

Robert Lustig in the *Huffington Post* combined his denunciations of Brand with a defence of the Labour Party and of Barack Obama, proclaiming that not voting was “cowardice”.

The venal warmonger Nick Cohen, writing in the *Observer*, was not satisfied with merely depicting Brand as evil, comparing him with Italian Fascist leader Benito Mussolini.

Things reached a truly ludicrous crescendo when fellow comedian Robert Webb announced in the *New Statesman* that Brand’s attack had led him to decide to rejoin the Labour Party!

In an open letter to Brand, Webb accused him of “wilfully talking through your arse about something very important” by “actively telling a lot of people that engagement with our democracy is a bad idea....The last Labour government didn’t do enough and bitterly disappointed many voters. But, at the risk of losing your attention, on the whole they helped... [and] changed the real lives of millions of real people for the better”.

He ended by congratulating himself on having the “unfathomable privilege” of being born in 21st century Britain, pompously attributing Brand’s urge for revolution to an “ache for the luminous” that “isn’t

available any more in revolution. We tried that again and again, and we know that it ends in death camps, gulags, repression and murder.”

There is not the space here to debunk Webb’s ignorant depiction of the crimes perpetrated in the Soviet Union by the Stalinist bureaucracy—the most counter-revolutionary tendency in world history—as the inevitable product of revolution. He says nothing new in any case—merely regurgitating the political prejudices he will have imbibed daily at Cambridge University. And Brand himself did a good job of pointing out that the Cambridge-educated Webb has no idea whatsoever of the reality of 21st century Britain for millions of less privileged people than he.

But it is important to understand why Brand aroused such a degree of righteous indignation.

This can only be understood as rooted in the sober calculation of his detractors that he speaks to the genuine sentiment of many, many people, above all the younger generation. In this regard, the comment of Tom Chevers, “Russell Brand, unnecessary revolutionary”, in the *Daily Telegraph* is by far the most apocalyptic and has the merit of at least a modicum of honesty.

Brand, wrote Chevers, “worries me because, if this is how ‘young people’ are thinking...then maybe he’s right and we actually are all heading for a revolution”.

Citing Brand’s statement, “there’s going to be a revolution. This is the end. I haven’t got a flicker of doubt”, he asks, “Doesn’t that give you a chill”?

“Generally speaking, revolutions are terrible ideas. If you want to make things better, Russell, vote for the least worst option, obey the law, and form a political party that campaigns for what you think needs to change”.

He concludes, “If we have a revolution, it will be because people, like Brand (or Right-wing mirror images of him), think that the world is going to hell and we need to tear it up and start again. It isn’t. We don’t.”

With apologies to Mr Chevers, it is and we do.

Here essentially is why Brand, a generally engaging and studiously eccentric figure, has found himself cast as a modern day version of Lenin. His verdict on the political establishment is correct and is as widely accepted as his call for a socialist and egalitarian society is attractive.

For that reason the desperate and concerted attempt to stir up contempt for Brand will backfire—and will instead fall down on the defenders of a rotten and unsustainable status quo.



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