

## 20 Years Since the Fall of The Berlin Wall- The Case for Socialists

Just a couple of weeks ago, we saw the [20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall](#). This was part of a wave of revolutions across the continent of Europe, with strikes, demonstrations and social movements turning against State Capitalist regimes, and subsequently overthrowing them. This culminated in one of the most critical images of the 20th century, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall.



There are many lessons to be learnt from this event. One of the first has been the decline in all groups on the revolutionary left of politics in England except for the [Socialist Workers Party](#). All other groups stressed, to varying degrees, how damaging the waves of revolutions were for the left, and how they would damage the working class. This was born out of their analysis, largely of the Soviet Union being either a [Workers State](#), or a [Degenerated Workers state](#). In both instances, this mistaken analysis led them to believe that the regimes in the Eastern Bloc were structurally more progressive and advantageous for Workers than the capitalist West. Given this analysis, it makes sense, that they would therefore defend the regimes ahead of the mass of workers who fought to overthrow them.

In the SWP, our analysis of Russia as a [State Capitalist](#) country, extorting a surplus value from the workers in the USSR, allowed us to celebrate the wave of Revolutions based on the understanding of socialism as “The self emancipation of the working class” as Marx defined it.

The collapse of the wall marked a massively symbolic moment for humanity. A huge number of people in the west see this as a special moment in history, and it explains why many

people claim to have a piece of the wall, and cherish it. They see that the wall expressed the gravest of oppression of humanity, and the taking of it down of this wall is an expression of liberation.

So, if there was a wave of revolutions, why has a more progressive society not followed? The nature of the resistance against the Eastern Bloc, was distorted. An activist from East Germany spoke about how, the main slogan went from “we are *the* people” to “we are *a* people”. This is a small example of how a social movement against the state, became a movement in favour of unification. Just as in revolutions with political demands over who controls society and for what purpose, the wealthy minority of the impoverished majority became an excuse for an ‘economic revolution’, and the liberalisation of trade.

Russia is an example of such ‘revolutions’. Why is it that the majority of people who were wealthy under the former USSR and its secretive KGB, are even more wealthy now? Those who ran industry under the Communist Party, became those who were “allocated” as the leaders of industry in the post-communist era. For example, Putin was a former KGB spy, very influential in Soviet circles, but now is the prime minister under liberal Russia. Have the power or resources really shifted to the mass of the people since 1989? Or has there been a greater centralisation of power, and wealth and influence in those societies?

The West spoke of how ‘history had finished’. How the great battle for society, between capitalism and socialism was now over, with capitalism victorious. Yet, the alleged economic miracles (that were never demanded in the East) have led to greater misery for the majority of people, and continued economic instability. Capitalism is now failing in the West, and also in the former Eastern Bloc states, and isn’t providing answers to the problems expressed in 1989. 1989, was not the end, but the beginning, of a new epoch of struggle, against the capitalism system, without the dead wood of Stalinism holding us back.

The revolutions in 1989 were in the tradition of [Hungary in 1956](#), [Germany in 1953](#) and [Czechoslovakia in 1968](#). A leader of the Hungarian Revolution, was [Georg Lukács](#), a committed Leninist, and great friend to Lenin. The tradition of socialism from below, and the self-emancipation of the working class began in Russia in 1917.

As Socialists in Ashford, we should celebrate the victories of 1989, to show the huge potential the mass of people have, even against some of the most brutal, sophisticated and oppressive regimes in the history of humanity. We should also draw inspiration from this. When Solidarity began, it was a small group of disillusioned activists, who set about trying to change the world. It shows, that when the people are united, and committed, and the possibilities are endless. We have many battles ourselves in Ashford from galvanizing support for stigmatized communities, to challenging the council for it’s undemocratic and self-interested policy-making and supporting the postal workers as they come under increasing pressure from bosses and the Government . The Fall of the Berlin wall should give us the confidence, and belief to go out and change the world!

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