

Dedicated to Abolishing War, Establishing Justice, and Fighting Climate Disaster  
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## We Face a Choice: Tyranny or Revolution

By Chris Hedges

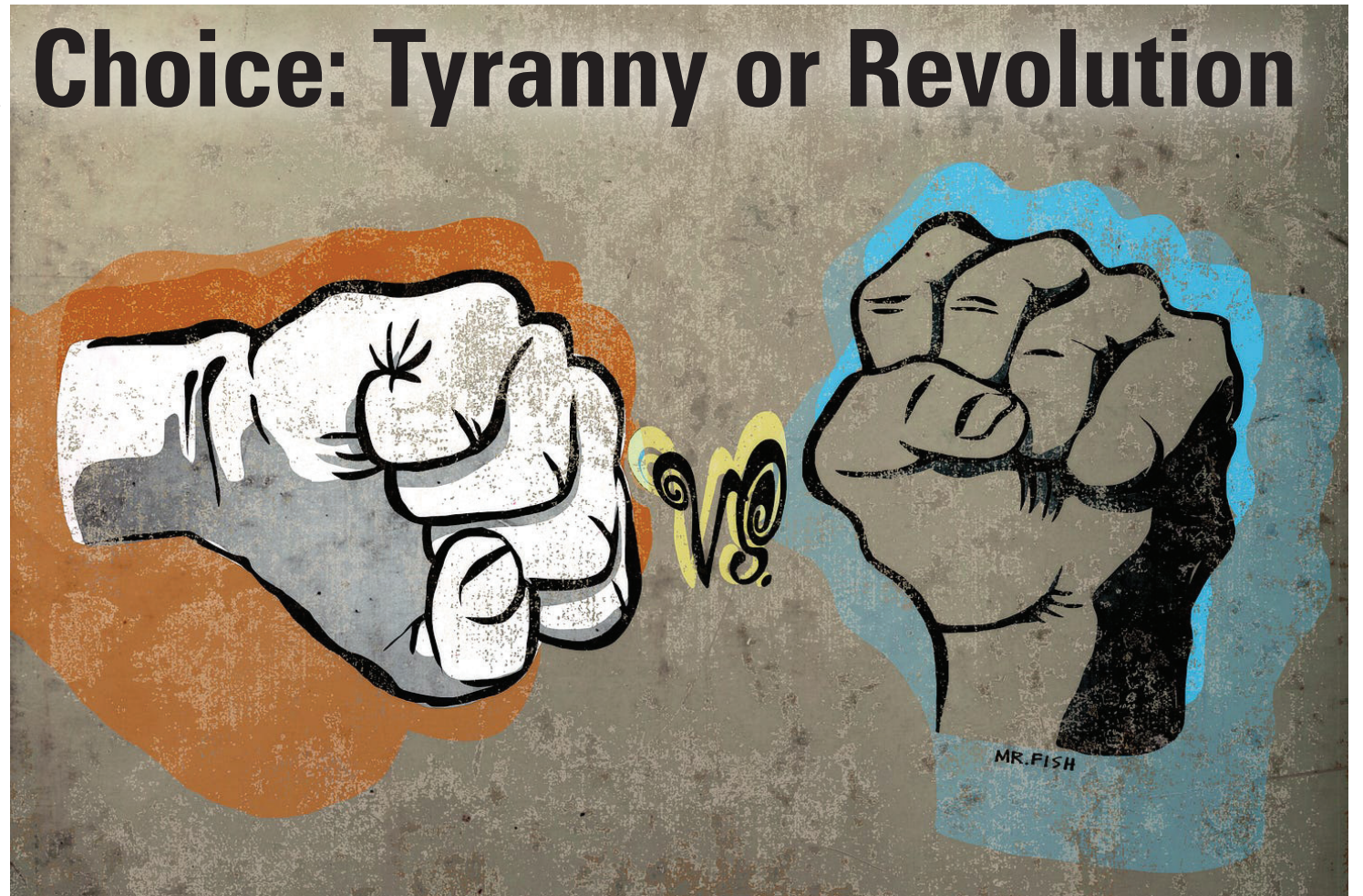
**M**EXICO CITY—There are two ways to confront global capitalism. There are mass movements, especially strikes, which disrupt commerce and government to force the ruling class to create systems of justice and equality—albeit ones where capitalists retain significant power.

The National Coordinator of Education Workers in Mexico (CNTE)—a grassroots union created in 1979 by dissident teachers—is currently attempting this in Mexico. It announced that if its demands for salary increases and job security are not met it will occupy public spaces and shut down the World Cup soccer matches scheduled to take place later this month in Mexico City.

When the teachers went on strike in the Mexican city of Oaxaca in 2006, following the incarceration and disappearances of union leaders, police fired on the protesters. The community rose up and drove the police out of the city. Oaxaca established an autonomous anarchist commune for several months. Although the commune was ultimately crushed by the Mexican government, the uprising spawned popular assemblies, independent media and empowered indigenous communities.

The second way to destroy capitalism is through the nationalization of industries and banks and the seizure of capitalist assets. This radical route entails, as in the Russian or Cuban revolutions, violence. Capitalists do not part with their monopolies on wealth and power peacefully. They orchestrate severe state and vigilante violence. They install dictators and fascists who abolish civil liberties, carry out mass arrests and criminalize even the most tepid forms of dissent.

Accommodating capitalists and their in-



stitutions, even with high taxation, regulation, strong labor laws and a prohibition of monopolies, means living amid a hostile force. It is a matter of time before this hostile force organizes to dismantle the social democratic state as happened in Sweden, Britain and Salvador Allende's Chile.

Liberalism, which Rosa Luxemburg called by its more appropriate name, “opportunism” — is an integral component of capitalism. Liberalism ameliorates capitalism's excesses. But capitalism, Luxemburg argued, is an enemy that can never be appeased. Liberal reforms blunt resistance, but later, when things grow quiet, are revoked. The last century of labor struggles in the United States provides a case study of

Luxemburg's observation.

Luxemburg also knew that socialism and imperialism were incompatible. Imperialism, which empowers a war machine designed to enrich arms merchants and global capitalists, is accompanied by a poisonous ideology — what social critic Dwight Macdonald in his 1946 essay “The Root Is Man” calls the “psychosis of permanent war” — which makes socialism impossible.

The psychosis of permanent war results, as it has in the U.S., in the curtailing of civil liberties and punishing economic austerity. Dissent is equated with treason. State power serves the dictates of empire rather than democracy, which devolves into farce, or in our case, a tawdry reality show.

The rollback of the New Deal, the closest we came to a social democracy, began in the mid-1940s. Cold War anti-communism and corporate opposition converged to make war on organized labor and the New Deal left. This assault culminated in the Second Red Scare.

In 1947, President Harry Truman's Executive Order 9835 launched loyalty investigations that purged the left, including public-sector workers and union allies. That same year, the Taft-Hartley Act directly targeted organized labor by restricting strikes, secondary boycotts and union security agreements and by requiring union officers to sign anti-communist affidavits.

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General Strike Commemoration march. Photo: Stanley Flanders Arlidge

## From the 1926 General Strike to Mamdani on May Day in New York

*Why workers keep turning to history.*

By Laura Flanders

**T**he workers who built Britain's warplanes in 1976 had a problem. Their factory was about to close. Instead of conceding to a “downsizing”, they did something radical: they drew up a plan. Not a grievance or a strike notice, a plan; 150 products their hands and minds could

make instead of fighter jets: solar panels, kidney dialysis machines, vehicles for people with disabilities, electric buses. “Socially useful work”, they called it. It became known as the Lucas Plan.

Nobody in power listened—with one significant exception. Tony Benn, then Energy Secretary in the Labour government, didn't just listen. He was the one who issued the challenge: if closure is coming, what's your alternative? He gave

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