

Britain in the Grips of the Economic and Social Crisis

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Against the backdrop of a glittering Olympics organised by the self congratulatory, back-slapping political classes, the UK was and continues to be in the grip of crisis. The welfare system is under sustained attack, workers' rights are being stripped away and wages continue to fall in real terms. At the same time in 'austerity Britain', however, there's always enough taxpayers' money to pour into the black hole of imperialist wars and the pockets of the profiteers that live off them, courtesy of David Cameron's government of millionaire ministers.

Capitalism, especially the neo-liberal variety, is moribund. It has reached its inevitable increasingly totalitarian dead end. In the 1980s, Britain outsourced much of its manufacturing to cheap labour economies in order to boost profits. To provide a further edge, trade unions and welfare rights were attacked. As wages stagnated (or decreased in absolute terms) and unemployment increased, the market for goods was under threat. The answer lay in lending people money and creating a debt ridden consumer society.

Of course, this resulted in new opportunities for investors in finance and all kinds of dubious financial products were created, sold to the public and packaged and shifted around the banking system. Toxic debt bubbles were created then burst and public money bailouts for billionaire bankers and austerity for the masses followed. It's been the same story across much of the western world, managing capitalism's crises for the last few decades in the manner of ever-decreasing circles.

If there ever was a time for revolution, surely it is now. While a heavily weakened labour and trade union movement is seeking to resist the austerity agenda and with many other groups in Britain protesting, the distinct impression is that an effective widespread revolt against capitalism itself remains a very distant hope.

For a large section of the population, the Wills and Kate royal reality show, retail therapy, bogus terror threats and blood-drenched imperialism under the lie of 'our soldier heroes' killing to 'save life' in far-away lands continue to distract and divert attention from the failing system itself.

Thanks to this, the revolution is on hold and possibly always will be. Take a Sunday morning stroll through England's green and pleasant land to appreciate this. Stale pools of last night's beer-vomit clog the gutters. Sunday morning booze-soaked hangovers fuzz memories of the previous night's deeds done and actions best forgotten. Every Saturday night is a full-fledged grim reality show on the streets of downtown Britain.

A million wannabe young women wishing they were not themselves, wishing they were Jenny Lopez or Victoria Beckham. From minimum wage beautician to footballer's wife in an

X-Factor instant. Vodka fuelled dreams in this, England's not so green and pleasant land.

'Save me from my life of low pay and even lower aspiration, Vicky. I wanna be like you, I wanna be you'. Sex sells, but whose buying? Some coked-up drug dealer might do, but preferably David Beckham. I could be the next 'Posh', if I give you what you want, what you really, really want.

Glammed up, spiced up and sexed up, believing they have the 'X' factor or whatever it takes to be free, free from the mundane, free from being ordinary in a fake fantasy culture of 'girl power', fame and celebrity.

But this is aspirant Britain. This is comatose Britain sleeping to the sounds and visions of media-produced plastic role models and celebrity product endorsement. It's not about overthrowing the system, it's about being made blind to it. It's not about rejecting it, it's about accepting it as normality. Who reads Karl Marx when Cosmo says empowerment lies in lipstick? Who needs Lenin when you can watch English Premier League multi-millionaire footballers whose only revolting duty is to endorse the very products that bind the fan to the lies and logos of a narcissistic, self-incarcerating consumerism?

Who wants revolution when you can turn on and tune in to self styled messiah Simon Cowell, as he rules over his empire of franchised TV shows, celebrities and wannabes. Acquire immediate salvation from the mundane with Cowell - the giver, the creator, the destroyer - the ultimate Godhead for those seeking to enter the promised land of fame and riches and acquire their unique place in the pantheon of celebritydom. For those not already doped out on spymaster-sanctioned heroin on Britain's housing estates, this form of opiate will do just as fine.

It is a damning indictment of society, where people accept the faith that this is how life should be lived, as they pray before the never ending conveyor belt of disposable commodities and heroes to be fetishised, consumed then spat out when they pass their very short sell by dates. It's the secular theology of the age, built on flotsam and jetsam products, celebrities and fads that ebb and flow with the vagaries of mass titillation and the machinations of corporate greed.

And do not expect Britain's Labour Party to galvanise or organise the masses any time soon. As with the current Conservative regime, the Labour Party by and large promotes the corporate-backed lie that all of this is liberating. Yes, people are actually free! Free to be monitored and surveyed by the state like no other country in Western Europe, free to be cynically targeted by the market, free to pick up the tab for the failings of financial capital and free to build up the greatest amount of personal debt and misery in Europe.

'Freedom' within the confines of what increasingly resembles an open prison isn't much to celebrate. The actual reality in Britain is economic meltdown and social crisis.

Harold Macmillan, the Tory Prime Minister in the 1950s, once told the Brits that they'd never had it so good due to rising post-war affluence. Maybe now it's a case of they have never had it so bad as people drown in their Saturday night vomit and indulge in the seeds of their own imprisonment with eyes wide shut.

Originally from the northwest of England, Colin Todhunter has spent many years in India. He has written extensively for the Deccan Herald (the Bangalore-based broadsheet), New Indian Express and Morning Star (Britain). His articles have also appeared in various other

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