

2011 - A year of mass struggle and revolutions

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It is only February and already this year has seen mass protests and revolutionary movements bring down governments, defying dictators and the armed thugs that protect them. 2011 could be ?one of those years? like 1968 where the whole world seems to erupt in resistance to capitalism and oppression.

So why is it happening?

It all comes from class, the growing divide between the rich who run society and those of us who work, contributing our labour to create the bosses profit. In times of bounty when capitalism is booming the profits are privatised into the hands of the elite and powerful. The rest of us make do with the scraps. But when times go bad the losses are socialised, are forced upon us, rammed down our throats whilst the bankocracy bay for blood. Everywhere the growth of inequality is apparent; it is a consistent and constant trend, the natural result of the market system that exercises such a dictatorship over all of us.

But people resist. They resist because they have to. And these acts of resistance are our response to their system, to the horrors that they inflict upon us. We fight back against the chronic problems, the poverty and the dictatorships. But we fight against the acute crisis, the recession, the cuts, the job losses and the lies of the capitalists.

The class nature of these attacks is clear ? the people in power want the rich to get richer. They see it as a social good. It is part of their system ? part of how they see the world and its workings that the poor must be made to suffer. They see us simply as the raw material for exploitation, not as people but as units, as objects, as parts of a machine that exists only to make them profit.

The movements that have emerged in many countries in Europe are a result of the massive austerity measures. The welfare state is under serious attack as the bankocracy and captains of industry that run the economy and pull the strings demand that the cost of the recession be passed onto the working and middle classes. The struggles so far have won some small victories and slowed down a few of the measures but have been unable to stop the government and capitalists? attacks. The reason for these must be debated and understood, which is why the League for the Fifth international does not shy away from criticising those who claim to lead the movement but who invariably lead it to defeat.

Yet the mood to resist has not gone away, and Europe will see more movements and strikes in the coming months.

But protests and strikes can also emerge around defensive issues to do with workers rights as the recent events in Wisconsin prove. As part of an emergency budget Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker has not only slashed public spending and cut jobs but has also scrapped collective bargaining for the state?s public sector employees. All of this is happening in a country where millions more Americans are on food stamps because their wages aren?t enough to feed their families.

?All dictators will fall?

Today all eyes are on the revolutions happening in the east. In North Africa and the Middle East millions of people live in conditions, which span across borders, across generations.

People suffering a lack of choice, unemployment, humiliation and a lack of dignity live in such conditions precisely because the western world lives in relative luxury. The imperialist nations suck the third world dry of resources, keeping most of the spoils in the hands of the ruling classes. This leaves the countries often under developed, or unable to improve their economies substantially. There is little or no welfare, yet chronic structural unemployment. Low wages are the norm as multinationals encroach into the territories, demanding cheap labour and loose labour laws. Privatisation strips the nation of its infrastructure, the market commodifies everything and nothing is safe from the expansion and demands of capital to accumulate and control.

The conditions of life make the people restless, angry, they want change. But the capitalists can't give it to them, not without threatening their own profits. The west sends some aid for food and other things, the patronising granting of charity by those with money to burn. But mostly we send aid in the form of guns and tanks. Egypt gets \$1.3billion a year. Bahrain, the poorest of the gulf coast states, gets \$19.5 million a year; Yemen is given \$35 million. Israel receives £3 billion, in order to police the Palestinians and act as the gendarme for imperialism in the region.

The imperialists take their futures and give them tyrannies. This is the injustice of the world we live in today ? it is all transparent, it is all above board. It is signed, stamped and approved by a hundred governments. Every major world institution shapes this process and approves of the final result.

Half of the Middle East and North African region population is under the age of 24. They are largely educated, but with no prospects for careers. Some try and go to the west to find work and to send money home, but the west is closing its borders tighter every year. Mohammed Bouazizi, the 23 year old graduate who burnt himself to death in Tunisia, launched the movement which toppled President Ben Ali. Bouazizi had no job, he was selling food on the street to try and make some money. He was a victim of the imperialism's brutality, and his despair drove him to suicide. How many others felt like him?

The chronic problems are compounded by the acute crisis of the world recession. But now all the discontent is connected by the new technologies. In countries that exercise such strict censorship over the print media the social media websites play a crucial role in networking people together, exchanging ideas, creating the conditions for civil debate and mobilisation. The blogosphere is the modern equivalent of the revolutionary pamphleteers of the European and American revolutions, they are the critical moles, burrowing away under the regime, spreading dissent, and daring to free their speech. They are brave, and can face imprisonment or worse. Navid Mohebbi ? an 18 year old ? was arrested, imprisoned and beaten for blogging on women's rights in Iran. Kareem Suleiman in Egypt was imprisoned for 4 years for criticising Mubarak. These examples are just the tip of the iceberg.

But as the US journalist Thomas L Friedman said, referring to the Iranian Green movement in 2009, ?Bang bang beats tweet tweet.? The power and might of the state cannot be overcome through Facebook or Twitter. Material force must be overthrown by material force ? and only a movement involving millions can truly challenge the power of these military and religious dictatorships. That is what we have seen emerge in Tunisia and Egypt, the revolutions are in full flow, they have won important victories but there is still more work to do.

And the victories won so far in Egypt have given hope to millions across the region, that they too can fight

and win. The spread of these movements, their pace, their shared tactics and messages all stem from the shared conditions that people live under, whether they are Arabs or Persians, Muslims or Christians, on the gulf coast of north Africa.

Every dictator trembles with fear at the thought that the protests will come to their country, bring down their regimes, force them into exile. Everywhere they talk of security, they claim the protesters are not patriots, they mumble darkly about ?outside forces?. This chatter cannot hide what is really happening. Revolutions are happening. This is not being conducted by the US or EU, in fact it is happening against their will. The Iranian regime will laugh at the downfall of a US stooge like Mubarak and praise the people in Tahrir square but they will mercilessly try and destroy anything similar happening in their own country

The year 2011 will be a year of mass resistance and protest. It will shake the world and change it forever. Everything depends not on the capacity of the masses to struggle and sacrifice, that much has been proven already. It depends on whether a political party and programme can be developed which channels the energy and determination into a conscious assault on the very social relations which give rise to the crisis of the east and the west.

The importance of a Fifth international is demonstrated now more than ever. We must unite those in struggle and fight for workers power across the globe, based around a common programme and perspective. Everywhere the working class must be brought into the fight, must come to the head of the movement. This is not the idle dream of Trotskyists, it is the urgent task of today for billions. It is the difference between a world of barbarism, or one which is finally free from misery and oppression.

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