

A world in turmoil

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In addition to this, the more fundamentalist expression of right-wing political Islam, the Salafists around al-Nour, linked to the more fundamentalist Wahhabi brand of Islam emanating from Saudi Arabia and the doctrine of Al Qaeda, seems to have done well. They gained almost a quarter of the votes in the cities that had voted by 5 December and could probably register more than this in the countryside.

If they are allowed to form a government then the Brotherhood will come under serious examination. Unlike the Iranian revolution, when radical Islamic forces initially developed, the Brotherhood is politically conservative, accepting the free market, not favouring independent trade unions and rejecting 'extremist' brands of Islam in favour of the Turkish model of Erdogan, even borrowing the name of Turkey's ruling 'Freedom and Justice' party. This is the favoured model for the 'moderate' Islamist forces throughout the region, including Ennahda, the party in Tunisia which emerged victorious in the recent elections there.

So great has been the disillusionment since the events of February that questions have arisen as to whether it was a real revolution in the first place. In fact, in both Tunisia and in Egypt the masses moved independently or semi-independently against the dictatorships of Ben Ali and Mubarak. They made the revolution but because of insufficient consciousness of their own power and the lack of a programme and mass parties to achieve this they did not complete the revolution in a social and economic sense.

Reaction was initially impotent in the fate of the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions. But it was given a chance to intervene by events in Bahrain and Libya. In Libya, there was initially a genuine revolution of an incipient character in Benghazi in particular which was derailed by a counter-revolution in a 'democratic' form.

However, as the scale of bloodletting and reprisals - sometimes against completely innocent people including black-skinned Libyans and foreign workers, some of whom had lived in Libya

for many years - has been revealed there is profound questioning as to whether 'democracy' or counter-revolution currently dominates.

The regime in Bahrain was saved by the intervention of the Saudi armed forces.

Britain

The onset of the crisis has profoundly affected Britain, disastrously reinforced by the election of the ConDem coalition government in 2010.

The British ruling class has allowed its manufacturing base to atrophy in favour of investment in financial services, which have now collapsed. All the layers of fat built up to cushion British capitalism from economic storms have been eaten away. Its empire has gone and North Sea oil revenues have begun to run dry.

Unprecedented cuts in living standards have been implemented with more to come. The government admits that living standards in 2015 will be lower than they were in 2002; society will have stood still for over ten years! This will go down historically as a lost decade.

Unemployment has climbed to a new 17-year high, severely affecting the young, with over one million unemployed, while there are now 1.1 million jobless women, with more to follow in the dead-end of joblessness. Even the police and clergy are worried that this situation will lead to repetitions of the riots in August.

Britain faces a situation it has not confronted for 80 years. The ConDem government's declaration of war against all the rights and conditions of the British working class is the greatest challenge since the period immediately prior to the 1926 general strike.

This explains the ferocious reaction of the mass of working people reflected in the huge demonstrations and strikes in 2011: 26 March, the biggest specifically working class demonstration in history; 30 June a partial public sector strike; and the mammoth 30

November strike.

The official leadership of the Trade Union Congress (TUC) was compelled to reflect this, which in turn arose from the presence from below within the trade unions of the National Shop Stewards Network playing a key role in this.

Young members of the Socialist Party and other activists in Youth Fight for Jobs have also conducted a heroic and energetic campaign against youth unemployment, including the new Jarrow march, as well as intervening in the aftermath of the riots in London to defend youth facilities, etc.

Conclusions

Clearly, we have arrived at a turning point in world history. The utter bankruptcy of capitalism is clear before the eyes of the world. The capitalists - at least their representatives - openly confess their inability to solve the problems of humankind. Patchwork solutions, which are all that is on offer, are not enough.

This is revealed in the economy, in the social situation, with the increasing impoverishment of growing sections of the working masses, and also in the environment.

Any pretence of a 'green agenda' is being thrown overboard as capitalism scrambles for an economic lifeline to save its system. 'Growth' at any cost - which will remain illusory - is proclaimed by the Con-Dem government in Britain, even if this results in a rise of harmful emissions. At the same time, the climate change conference in Durban ended with only a minimal agreement.

This reinforces our contention that capitalism will be incapable of saving the world from a catastrophic and potentially irreversible meltdown of the ice caps and the environment as a whole. Only socialism can show a way out, opening an optimistic future for suffering humankind.

Want to join the fightback? Join the socialists!

The relentless pursuit of profit brought about the banking crisis and recession. Our world is run on that basis - the short-sighted, chaotic capitalist system that exists only to enrich the fat cats.

We need an alternative. Taxing the rich, such as the bankers, and cancelling projects like Trident nuclear weapons would be a start. But more fundamental change is needed.

We need socialism! The banks and major industries would be publicly owned and democratically controlled.

It would mean democratic planning of the economy to meet the needs of all and to protect the environment.

The Socialist Party has a proud record of struggle and currently plays a leading role in the campaigns against cuts, putting forward both a strategy for the fightback and a socialist alternative.

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The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI) is the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated. The CWI is organised in 45

countries and works to unite the working class and oppressed peoples against global capitalism and to fight for a socialist world. For more details including CWI publications write to: CWI, PO Box 3688, London E11 1YE. email cwi@worldsoc.co.uk See: socialistworld.net

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