

Organise the fightback – from Tahrir Square to Wisconsin

Stephan Kimmerle

The Committee for a Workers' International (CWI – the socialist international organisation to which the Socialist Party is affiliated) fights for an alternative to cuts, crisis and capitalism worldwide.

Public spending cuts and attacks on the living standards and rights of the working class people are the only things on offer from capitalist politicians like Cameron, Obama and Merkel. They are attempting to solve the world economic crisis at the expense of working people and the poor. But this is meeting with resistance.

However, protest is not enough. Determined struggle is necessary to block the assault on living standards. Trade union and community fightbacks can be successful, especially if activists in these struggles are linked and organised. Faced with an economic system that cannot maintain, let alone improve, living standards, the question is: what is the alternative?

The CWI has activists, groups and parties in over 45 countries and six continents who struggle both for immediate improvements in living standards and rights and to win support for socialist ideas to change the world.

Wisconsin revolt

In the last few weeks a mass movement in Madison, USA, sprang into action to defend trade union rights and the conditions of public sector workers against Wisconsin's right-wing governor, Scott Walker. As the radical film maker Michael Moore said, this Tea Party Republican has declared "class war" which will "arouse a sleeping giant" ie the working class. In a small state of less than six million people, demonstrations of up to 200,000 showed the fury and determination to defend union rights.

There was widespread support, both in and outside the trade unions, for the call for a one-day general strike. Socialist Alternative, the CWI in the USA, advocated concrete measures to make that next step a reality. Unfortunately the trade union leadership is more interested in rotten compromises than concretely defending working class people.

We have seen this in a lot of countries where many trade union leaders make verbal protests and, sometimes, organise mass protests and strikes simply as a way of 'letting off steam', but not as measures to mobilise for a serious struggle. This is why the CWI fights to build democratic and fighting trade unions. Members of the CWI all around the globe are involved in trade unions fighting

Trade unionists' solidarity protest in Wisconsin, USA.

back and, where necessary, in the struggle to re-build them.

For example, the Socialist Movement Pakistan (CWI) has played a decisive role in the formation of a new, independent and combative 500,000-strong national trade union confederation. Socialist Resistance, the CWI in Kazakhstan, leads the struggle of 'Kazakhstan 2012' against the country's dictator, president Nazarbayev, and has helped to form a new independent national trade union confederation.

The Arab revolution

The desperate act on 17 December 2010 of a young man setting himself on fire in Sidi Bouzid, Tunisia, triggered a revolutionary wave which spread across the Maghreb and the Middle East.

One month later, the dictator Ben Ali had to flee from Tunisia, the following month the brutal 'pharaoh' Hosni Mubarak was ousted, three months later the struggle still continues in Bahrain, Libya, Yemen, Oman, Jordan and Syria.

To end neocolonial oppression the power of the multinationals and imperialism has to be broken.

The CWI fights for full democratic rights. They cannot be separated from the social needs of working people. Only a socialist transformation of society will guarantee a lasting basis to defend democratic rights against all attempts of the remnants of the old regimes and the rich elite to roll back time.

The decisive force to fight and overcome brutal oppression is the organised working class. A glimpse of that was shown in the events in Egypt and Tunisia.

In neocolonial countries like Pakistan, Nigeria and Sri Lanka, the parties of the CWI fight for this way

out of poverty, hunger and communist war and terror.

With www.chinaworker.info and a magazine in Mandarin, the CWI supports the first steps of the new developing giant, the Chinese working class, to independently organise itself.

Resistance in Europe

In Greece the regime of austerity has been met by eight general strikes. A general strike last September, with ten million on the streets, brought Spain to a halt. Hundreds of thousands have recently protested in Portugal. Mass action and strikes in France, Italy and elsewhere show that no government in Europe is stable or immune to the growing anger of youth and workers.

But, so far, these protests and actions have not yet fundamentally blocked the assault on living standards. Therefore a clear plan of action to stop the immediate assault and an alternative to the crisis-ridden capitalist system is needed. This is why we argue for the nationalisation of all banks and the commanding heights of industry under workers' control and management.

Mass movements and struggles can bring to power governments that truly represent working people and that implement socialist policies and break the power of big business and the super rich. To succeed in that, the working class needs its own party.

In most countries the old parties, once rooted in the labour movement, like the Labour Party, now fully support capitalism, including accepting the need for cuts.

As Joe Higgins, newly re-elected member of the Irish Parliament from the Socialist Party (CWI Ireland) expressed it: "There is a huge vacuum on the left. There is a need for a new movement to represent the working class in its widest sense".

The CWI is active in the development of new mass workers' parties. The CWI in France, Gauche Revolutionnaire (GR), is a critical part of the NPA (New Anti-capitalist Party). GR argues within the NPA for a principled left-wing force which also offers a strategy for the working class and the trade union movement on how to fight the pro-big business government of Nicolas Sarkozy.

Sozialistische Alternative, the CWI in Germany, fights for a socialist programme in die Linke (the Left party).

The Socialist Party (CWI) in Ire-

land uses its two members in the national parliament and one member of the European parliament to support worker and community struggles, but also to build a new political representation of working class people in forming the United Left Alliance.

CWI parliamentarians make no personal gain from their positions, living on a worker's wage and giving the rest of their bloated parliamentary salaries to the workers' movement.

In rebuilding the workers' movement, including new mass parties of the working class, the CWI seeks to organise the resistance and to spread Marxist ideas within these new formations – the ideas of the CWI to end capitalism and the dictatorship of the markets.

Socialist alternative

With the nuclear crisis in Japan following the earthquake and tsunami disaster it is again clear that governments who put big business profits first cannot be relied on to efficiently allocate resources to those in need, let alone provide safety and security.

CWI supporters in Japan demand the nationalisation of all energy plants and companies. Then this sector could be reorganised under democratic workers' control and management based on renewable energy sources.

As the revolutionary socialist Karl Marx explained 150 years ago, for the capitalists, profit is all and everything: the "self-expansion of capital is its only purpose". Today, a super-rich elite, big business and multinational corporations control the wealth of society.

The only way out of exploitation, unemployment, poverty, hunger, war and environmental destruction is to fight capitalism.

On the basis of a socialist society the economic resources can be used in a democratically planned way by, and in the interests of, the vast majority of people. This has nothing to do with the dictatorial, privileged bureaucratic Stalinist elites like those regimes in the former USSR and Eastern Europe.

Since 2008 the capitalist crisis has pushed working people into a new era of austerity. It is also a new era of mass movements which are increasingly challenging the ruling classes and capitalism itself.

Be part of the international resistance and join the CWI!

The Committee for a Workers' International

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

www.socialistworld.net

The CWI website contains news, reports and analysis from around the world. Recent articles include:



Portugal: Explosion of protest on 12 March

A country in ferment...

Danny Byrne, CWI, and Francisco Oliveira Raposo, Socialismo Revolucionario (CWI, Portugal)



Hong Kong: Protest against nuclear power

Protesters marched to the city's Japanese consulate chanting "against nuclear power" and, "be active not radioactive".

Chinaworker.info



Lebanon: "Revolt against sectarianism! Revolt against corruption!"

20,000 take to Beirut's streets - a workers' alternative is needed.

CWI Lebanon



Workers protest against EU governments' austerity measures
photo Paul Mattsson