

Some Lessons from Tunisia

The situation in Tunisia reflects the truism from the Transitional Programme: *'In periods of acute class struggle, the leading bodies of the trade unions aim to become masters of the mass movement in order to render it harmless.....In time of war or revolution, when the bourgeoisie is plunged into exceptional difficulties, trade union leaders usually become bourgeois ministers.'* The UGTT leaders have been forced to pose as militant, as being with the masses, in order to from within the workers movement to carry out the wishes of imperialism to attempt to behead the revolution and turn the mass struggle onto the bourgeois terrain. Now that US imperialist agent Ghannouchi has allocated more posts to the bourgeois 'opposition', including the UGTT, the UGTT leaders now accept this. We were correct when we exposed that the government of 'salvation' as proposed by the UGTT was one which includes part of the old regime and which keeps the repressive apparatus intact. The leaders of the ITUC (International Trade Union Confederation) sent delegates to Tunisia to prop up the UGTT and to help impose the plans of imperialism.

The call from the ITUC leaders was the same as the NPA and fake left: for a Tunisia Democratic and Social. By 'social' the ITUC was saying that economic reforms should be implemented but under the same capitalist regime as before. This provides a cover for the betrayal of the Tunisian revolution, in essence turning workers eyes away from taking power for a promise of 'economic reform'. This is the same policy of Ben Ali, ie that of US and French imperialism, but minus Ben Ali. How can the Tunisian working class conquer food and work without expropriating the Tunisian capitalists and imperialist assets, and placing these under workers control? How can workers eat if power is still in the hands of the capitalists (Ben Ali regime and imperialism) How can the interim government bring about any democratic change if it has any remnant of the Ben Ali regime? Ghannouchi and the entire Ben Ali bureaucracy must go!

The first plans of this new 'interim government' is to implement 'anti-terrorist laws', in other words to implement the same programme as the US puppet regime of Ben Ali. These 'anti-terrorist' laws are nothing but a strengthening of the capitalist regime to crack down better on the working class now.

A crucial failing of the Tunisian working class has been the failure of the revolution to occupy and take over the means of production (the mines, transport, capitalist farms, capitalist industry, etc) and banks and to place it under workers control. Or more accurately, the UGTT leadership has encouraged workers to give up their control and take part in the 'Caravan for liberation' to act as a pressure tool for the petit bourgeois leaders of the UGTT and to divert the working class from building and strengthening their alternative power organisms (soviets). The Popular front of the trade union leaderships with the bourgeois lackeys of imperialism is what is attempting to betray the Tunisian revolution.

The isolation of the Tunisian (and north African) revolution from the imperialist centres by the forces of the World Social Forum, by the Stalinists, by the

middle class left, is a crucial factor that hinders the current counter-offensive of the world proletariat.

Our programme for Tunisia remains in essence (see our statement of 25.1.2011):

- ◆ Extension of the grassroots committees of workers and poor peasants to all parts of Tunisia, which should include delegates from the rank and file soldiers; for the extension of workers militia as part of these committees to all corners of Tunisia;
- ◆ For the formation of a national council of delegates from grassroots workers and poor peasants committees with delegates from the unemployed, from the rank and file soldiers
- ◆ All power to the grassroots worker and poor peasant committees
- ◆ Down with the interim government of the Ben Ali regime and UGTT-break with the capitalists: expropriate Ben Ali ,all the Tunisian capitalists and all imperialist assets and banks, without compensation to the capitalists, centralise and place under workers control (ie workers take over all the means of production); expropriate all the capitalist farms and joint ventures with imperialism, without compensation to the capitalists, place under agricultural workers control, nationalise the land and re-allocate land for the poor peasants based on joint decision of agricultural workers committees and poor peasants committees. It is only a revolutionary government based on the workers and poor peasant committees, uniting the masses in struggle in their ranks that can expropriate the capitalists and all imperialist assets and banks;
- ◆ Expel the UGTT leaders from the workers movement; for the UGTT to break with the capitalist regime of Ben Ali leftovers (puppets of US and French imperialism)
- ◆ For the immediate workers control over food distribution so that the masses can eat.
- ◆ Share all the work among all who can work
- ◆ Workers wages to rise when prices rise
- ◆ Equal pay for equal work in North Africa and Europe
- ◆ Expropriation in the imperialist centres of the imperialist companies that plunder Tunisia and North Africa and the Middle East. This can only be done by the working class taking power through revolutionary means in the imperialist centres.
- ◆ We need a revolutionary working class party in Tunisia as part of the refounding of the Fourth International. For an international conference in Egypt of revolutionary workers organizations and internationalist Trotskyists to prepare for the refounding of the Fourth International.

A 'Tunisian' revolution can explode anywhere around the globe

A fundamental feature of world capitalist-imperialist domination today is the suppression of basic bourgeois democratic rights in the semi-colonies and colonies. The granting of full democratic rights means opening ground for competitors to imperialist domination to develop. In a world dominated by

imperialism, capitalist development in the semi-colonies is thus based on the suppression of the indigenous capitalist class and middle class. The indigenous capitalist class and upper middle class, such as are allowed to develop, have no independent existence from imperialism- they are a product of class war when the indigenous masses rose against decades and centuries of colonial rule. The coming to political power of a section of the indigenous middle class as a means to subvert and prevent the working class from taking power (thanks to Stalinism), gave a new form of control to imperialism. All the regimes of the 'liberation movements' were bonapartist, posing as paternal figures or taking the form of military dictatorships- all of them appearing to stand above the class conflict but in the final analysis acting for imperialist interests, guaranteeing their domination of the masses..

After decades of experience of these bonapartist regimes in the semi-colonies, there is a general realisation that they are anti-worker and transmission belts for the world capitalist crisis onto the backs of the working class and fellow poor. With large-scale destruction of the peasantry and the concomitant rise of the proletariat, capitalism has created its own gravedigger. The greater weight of the proletariat on a world scale, especially in the semi-colonies, is what gives the 'Tunisian' revolutions a solid basis and thus the tendency to go up to the end in the current struggles.

Revolutions are possible in Saudi Arabia and the Emirates, in China, in Zimbabwe, in Korea, in Russia, in Jordan, Yemen, Libya, against Israel etc.

On the other hand the depth of the capitalist crisis also means that the working class in the imperialist centres are under unprecedented attack. As the inter-imperialist rivalry sharpens, some of the minor imperialists like Greece are being pushed down to become semi-colonies. The Ben Ali party (until it was belatedly expelled) was part of the same 'Socialist' International as Pasok, the current Greek ruling party that is carrying out the same offensive of the IMF against the masses (the same that the Socialist Party in France carried out yesterday, that the Labour Party in Britain carried out yesterday- which is carried forward by Sarkozy and Cameron-Brown today). The Tunisian masses show the way to the Greek, French and British proletariat and the European proletariat in general. The point is that for the masses to conquer bread and work, the working class has to take power by revolutionary means. But more than this, the relation of the imperialism to the semi-colonies is that generally the semi-colonies are kept as assembly plants, warehouses, and exporters of unprocessed raw materials for imperialism. It follows that, for example, a workers revolution in a semi-colony must be directly linked to the working class taking power in several of the imperialist centres in order for bread and work to be attained. It follows that the heroic proletarian revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt must be extended to the working class taking power through revolution in imperialist Europe and the USA, for example, for Socialism to be attained. This task poses the question of the setting up of a revolutionary International with section in the semi colonies and the imperialist centres as an immediate task.

The latest phase of the world imperialist crisis that started in 2008 is marked by hoarding of the world's food supply such as wheat, soy, etc to push up prices, it is marked again by artificial raising of the world oil price. These are desperate measures by imperialism to increase profits, no matter that billions of the world's masses are pushed into starvation and death. These are the objective conditions for Socialist revolution on a world scale.

While the capitalists go on their world counter-revolutionary offensive, Tunisia and now Egypt, marks a turn of the world working class towards a revolutionary offensive. The spectre of Socialism once again hangs over the heads of the capitalist forces.