

“The bourgeoisie, in truth, is bound to fear the stupidity of the masses so long as they remain conservative, and the insight of the masses as soon as they become revolutionary.”

(K. Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon)

NORTH AFRICA ABLAZE

The rapid spread of revolt across Africa North and beyond shows that the causes of this upheaval transcend national boundaries, that it is essentially a **social revolt** of the proletarian and semi-proletarian masses and the proletarianized petty bourgeoisie which the economic crisis has precipitated into famine.[1] And if, as usual, it is the weakest link in the imperialist chain that has ignited, it is important to note that the flames are licking at the doorstep of Europe. It is difficult to keep track of all the countries that have been hit! Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia. Revolts have also broken out in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Syria, Sudan, Malaysia. The journalists call them “*food riots*,” and there is no doubt that hunger and lack of prospects are one of main impulses. In reality the pressure of the social substratum has grown continuously and the bourgeoisie is sitting on a worldwide powder keg ready to explode. The detonator may be different in each case, but the effects will be identical. Even when the state concedes a bit more “bread” or a token of democracy to the masses, it will prove impossible to turn back. The revolts were characterized by the use of violence against the opponent – as soon as it used force against the protests – and there have been assaults on police stations, army barracks, and the very seats of power. In addition, many police and soldiers refused to shoot on their class brothers, with some even going over to the insurgents. Once the masses become aware of their strength, even though defeat is now inevitable, at the next opportunity they will have learned some lessons. All the bourgeoisies are highly concerned that what is happening in on the fringes of Europe may someday strike in the heart of capitalism.

The fact that the proletariat, now grown to gigantic proportions, has finally shaken out of its lethargy is confirmed by the absence of religious banners and flags on the bloodstained squares, and at the same time, the unity in action of proletarians of all ethnic groups, which has occurred more in Libya than elsewhere, where Berbers and Arabs have come together in the struggle against the regime. **That the revolt is a manifestation of a single class** character is confirmed by the international, non-religious and multi-ethnic aspect of the movement.

The movement that has engulfed Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt and Libya at the moment is still only **a revolt, not a revolution**, i.e., a blind rebellion of the

impoverished masses, insofar as it lacks a clear consciousness that it is only the first moment in a process that is destined to overthrow the classes in power, destroy their state apparatus, establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and replace the capitalist mode of production now in force with the new socialist mode of production in which commodities, money, wage labor and capital will be gradually eliminated until they disappear completely in full Communism. This clear consciousness defines the revolutionary class Party as an organ of collective revolutionary thought and action which supports and guides the subversive will of the masses. [2]

Yet at the same time it is **a revolt pregnant with revolution**: the spontaneity of the proletarian masses in revolt, in a movement demanding democracy, culminated in an assault on Parliament in Libya, an action that expresses **the intuitive understanding of a “democracy” that has nothing to do with electoralist and parliamentary maneuvering**, a “democracy” which is in reality nothing but the dictatorship of the underprivileged, the government of the street, the order that issues from the power of the masses who have finally had the courage to take their own destiny and that of the entire nation [3] into their hands. Moreover, by naïvely flying the national flag, as happened in Cairo, the rebellion of the poor masses of North Africa, undoubtedly without even knowing it, followed in the footsteps of the Communards who, in Paris in 1871, had the same reaction, but did so – and in this it differs from any nationalist movement – against the ruling classes and not against the workers of other nations: they **raised the tricolor to assert their own role as a national class, a class capable of seizing the reins of the nation** and thus emerging as an international class that exports its revolution beyond its own borders.

At the same time it must face reality and recognize that – **under current conditions – the revolt cannot grow into a revolution** that the revolutionary intuitions expressed by the spontaneity of the proletariat in struggle are inevitably destined to be lost, drowned, as happened in Egypt, in “a national concord restored under the aegis of the army” and a renewed harmony between the classes under the banner of “liberation” from the dictatorship of the tyrant of the moment, Mubarak and his *entourage*. In Egypt, indeed, the local ruling classes supported by the United States were able to act promptly to “tame the beast” of the revolt and replace the government in power with a military junta, able to hypnotize the masses with the mirage of a “true democracy” and at the same time, securely control the vital centers of the bourgeoisie's political and economic apparatus, although it is impossible to say how long the workers who defied the regime will continue to believe in this interclassist fairytale: in Italy in 1945, the euphoria created by the fall of the Duce lasted more than 50 years only because it was fueled by the economic boom of the postwar period, while it is legitimate to

assume that the honeymoon after the fall of Mubarak will be short, since the cruel pangs of hunger will quickly cure the poor masses of their antifascist hangover. In Libya things are currently taking place differently for the simple reason that there is no army that can reliably replace Gaddafi's Jamarihya to the satisfaction of the imperialist powers. Indeed, the Libyan army, which unlike the Egyptian army was not trained by the Americans, has literally disintegrated under the shock of the street uprising. As a result the major powers, who openly condemn Gaddafi's excesses, are forced to leave him alone, to let him be massacred by the rebels without mercy. If they really wanted, they could liquidate the Colonel even faster than they did Saddam Hussein. But later, after having occupied the country militarily, they would have to bomb the insurgents themselves, and this is why they have allowed Gaddafi do the dirty work.

But while the absence of the World Communist Party, in which the historical experience of the international proletariat is condensed, has prevented the North African rebellion from being transformed into revolution, while the proletarian giant has shown that it is able to wake up and direct powerful blows against the armor of the established order, though its feet are still made of clay, at the same time **the road to a resumption of revolutionary struggle is necessarily strewn with pitfalls** punctuated by outbursts that in appearance change nothing: ineffectual rebellions, blood shed without tangible results—in short, abortive revolutions. We must not “deplere” the premature revolts, as the social-traitors of every age and stripe do in all their “wisdom,” but understand and draw all possible lessons for the future, as the Marx-Party did with the Paris Commune.

In the absence of an alternative that is able to fool the proletariat in revolt, the Libyan bourgeoisie has unleashed a bloodbath by bombing the crowds with its warplanes and using foreign mercenaries and prisoners released especially to massacre the rebels. The disintegration of Gaddafi's army must be greeted with joy in that it demonstrates that the machinery of repression and counterrevolutionary violence is not invincible and that what happened in Tripoli and Benghazi will inevitably occur tomorrow in Paris, Rome, London, Beijing, Moscow and New York. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that **the cannibalism of the counterrevolution** has reached levels that make the crimes of Versailles at the time of the Commune of Paris, the bombardment of Milan by General Bava Beccaris in 1898,[4] and the even violence of the Whites in Russia after 1917 and in Hungary in 1919 pale by comparison. The flammable material building up in the foundations of modern society is potentially far more explosive compared to a century ago, and it would be naive to believe that the ruling classes are not prepared to cope with the coming social upheavals as efficiently as possible, i.e., by unleashing an orgy of bloodshed and terror without precedent, of which the charred bodies of proletarians bombarded by Gaddafi

are but a small foretaste.[5] Against these hired thugs, who are driven by a hatred and cynicism that would make wolves and hyenas cringe, the Red Terror **will have to be inflexible**, rejecting the hesitation, weakness and naiveté that have been the downfall of the labor movement in the past.

The world bourgeoisie pretends to be indignant at the excesses of “tyrants” (which it supported only yesterday) and pretends to be on the side of the insurgents. In reality it is only moved by terror, and when the metropolitan proletariat revolts as a result of the inevitable *deterministic shocks*, the violence that the bourgeoisie and its lackeys on the right and left deploy will make today's excesses seem mild. These people will not show any mercy. The proletariat must show them none either.

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[1] This also applies to a seemingly more “prosperous” country such as Libya: *“Libya is approaching 30% unemployment. This estimate, in the absence of official data, is from the ILO (International Labour Organization). This lack of jobs is a “structural” problem that affects mainly women and young people in a country where a third of the population is under 15 years of age. This does not take into account the massive presence of immigrant workers from other Arab countries and sub-Saharan Africa, estimated at more than one million, to which migrants must be added. Despite preliminary steps toward liberalization of the economy made after 2003, the state still employs 70% of the workforce. While the petroleum sector accounts for almost all exports and drives the growth of the economy, the manufacturing and building sectors represent approximately 20% of gross domestic product.”* (Lab / Ct / Adnkronos)

[2] *“A profound crisis of bourgeois society can give rise to a revolutionary movement when “the ‘upper classes’ cannot carry on in the old way” (Lenin, Left-Wing Communism), i.e when the ruling class is no longer able to make its own apparatus of repression work and the majority of workers “fully realise that revolution is necessary”. But this consciousness can only materialise in the class party which, in the final analysis, is the decisive factor in transforming the bourgeois crisis into a revolutionary crisis of the whole society. In order for society to escape from the paralysis into which it has sunk (and which the ruling class is unable to cure because it is no longer able to find the new forms that will liberate the productive forces and lead them in further development), it is therefore necessary that an organ of collective revolutionary thought and action exist that directs and heightens the subversive will of the masses. The masses’ desire “not to live in the old way”, the will to struggle and the spirit to act against the class enemy presuppose the crystallisation of a solid revolutionary theory within the proletarian vanguard called upon to lead the revolutionary masses. In*

the party, consciousness precedes action, contrary to what happens in the masses and individuals.[...] The transformation of the bourgeois crisis into a class war and a revolution presupposes the objective collapse of the social and political structure of capitalism, but it cannot come about - at least potentially - if the majority of workers are not convinced of or influenced by the revolutionary theory embodied in the party: it cannot be improvised on the barricades." ("Attivismo" [Activism], in *Battaglia Comunista*, No. 6 and 7, 1952).

[3] This should not be understood in the national sense of the term, but in the sense of a dictatorship of the proletariat over all of society.

[4] In May 1898, during the uprising in Milan that has gone down in history as the "revolt of the stomachs," the government declared a state of siege and General Bava Beccari, in his capacity as Extraordinary Royal Commissioner, ordered cannon to shoot at the crowd, killing 80 people and injuring 450. The bombardments ordered by Gaddafi have so far caused 1,000 deaths.

[5] See the reference to the so-called "Odessa Operation" in the article on the beatification of Pius XII.