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Libya: the grip of the dictatorship, the bombs of imperialism

Federazione dei Comunisti Anarchici

28 March 2011

The Arab peoples, the Arab proletariat, finally seem to be entering the post-modernist age. After centuries of domination and violence by the Turkish Empire first, then colonialism and finally the dictatorships that lasted throughout the second half of the last century, these peoples, this proletariat, are finally coming out of their solitude and challenging the power that oppresses them and denies them their freedom and dignity in which to live their lives.

The awareness of being exploited, of being excluded from the wealth of the dictators and their clans, of living without freedom or rights has rapidly turned into an awareness of being able to rely on their own strengths, of being able to organize themselves into popular committees that give voice to the opinions and contributions of all, of being able to challenge police forces and armies, of being able to bring down dictators and creating quite a few problems for the imperialist powers who supported them. And all this in spite of those who, out of more or less conscious racism or simply bad faith,

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Retrieved on 29th October 2021 from www.anarkismo.net

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described them or tried to pass them off as being “constitutionally” incapable of distinguishing between religion and politics.

The struggles have been going on now for months, beginning with Tunisia and Egypt, and have spread to the whole Arab world, even to those places where the strongholds of Western imperialism believed they were safe and had no need to “change horses”. After years of union struggles repressed in blood and ignored by the mass media when there seemed to be no connection to fundamentalism, freedom and modernity are now the slogan’s of the day. No more alibis about foreign enemies, no more burning American flags and denouncing the Zionists. The people are protesting against their own hierarchies, their own national bourgeoisies who over recent decades have enriched themselves by sucking the blood of the working classes, their own more or less illuminated monarchies, but without falling victim to the siren calls of Pan-Arabism or fundamentalism. The search for normalization is difficult, even though the ruling classes are masters of transformation and are always ready to re-generate themselves: despite all that may be said, the struggles are going on.

The tension is high in every Arab country throughout the Middle East and North Africa. The people are finally making themselves heard and the regimes are responding to this challenge with repression of the harshest kind.

In this context of general instability caused for the first time by popular rebellion and not just by media spin, the fact that certain European States are trying to take advantage of the situation in order to make the most out of it, to recover their spheres of influence in the Middle East which were under threat due to their increasingly untenable support for regimes which had long been unpalatable, explains France’s interventionism in the case of Libya. Although it had cut out a respectable role for itself on the chessboard of Mediterranean diplomacy by appointing itself the border guard of Europe’s coastline, Libya was still difficult to control due to the Colonel’s ability to present himself as the representative of the

African Union and the last champion of Third-Worldism, thanks also to his substantial financial capacity.

And so we see the manoeuvring and jostling for position among the various Libyan factions, and it becomes easy to find some general willing to pass over to the side of the rebels in exchange for a place in the sun in Cyrenaica. And if someone gets rid of one of the harder-to-manage pawns in the area (who had also chosen to be an untrustworthy and barely credible ally such as the Italian government), then the West as a whole can stake a claim on the area's future assets, delegitimizing the popular revolt on the one hand and providing a display of strength on the other. This explains the unseemly bargaining over the command of the operation between NATO and the Alliance, Italy's attempt to cope in an operation where it becomes unavoidable to barter Italy's main interests in Libya (oil and gas basically under the control of ENI) for the partial protection of its shores in an attempt to put a stop to the arrival of boatloads of desperate North Africans which up to now had been controlled by Qaddafi, and used by him as a powerful means of blackmail and survival.

In this context where things change with extraordinary rapidity and where big interests (everything from natural to financial resources and the control of immigration) are being safeguarded and redefined, these revolts have caused cracks in the imperialist set-up of the area.

What we, as revolutionary activists, are interested in is the potential for revolt and self-organization being expressed by populations whose demands are no longer set by clericalists or fundamentalists, but are instead concentrated on basic rights and the redistribution of wealth. With the bugbear of fundamentalism (used previously as a means of social and political control) no longer a threat, the Western powers are being forced to have recourse to armed intervention in order to protect not the rebels as they would have us believe, but the various factions vying for control — on behalf of the West — of resources. After a decade of wars masquerad-

ing as injections of democracy which only served to strengthen Western interests and local fundamentalists, now that struggle by the people themselves in these countries has won them greater democracy and secularism, they find themselves facing the terrible message being delivered by the jet fighters leaving our bases and the warships leaving our ports: freedom and social justice are not on capitalism's agenda.

The only possibility to build a more just society, a freer society lies in struggle, on either side of the Mediterranean.

This is why we support the popular committees and our comrades who, at the cost of their own lives and liberty, fight in the streets and squares of Benghazi, Syria, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, throughout the Middle East and North Africa.

This is why we are firmly opposed to the war and the military intervention whose inevitable result is devastation and misery in Libya, and to the cruel repression being carried out in other countries in their attempt to normalize the situation there.