

**These are not "riots" –**

**This is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain!**

**The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution!**



by Nina Gunić and Michael Pröbsting, 10.8.2011

In contrast to the bourgeois commentators and the middle class left the 68-year-old former black civil rights activist Darcus Howe expressed very well what is involved in the so-called "riots" in Britain's cities. In an interview with the BBC (which this capitalist state television put off soon from their website), he explained:

*"I don't call it rioting, I call it an insurrection of the masses of the people! It is happening in Syria, it is happening in Clapham, it is happening in Liverpool, it is happening in Spain, it is happening in Chile then, it is the nature of an historical moment!"*

We agree with his testimony and add: It was high time for the rebellion! Every day, black people and immigrants are discriminated and oppressed not only at work, in education and at the authorities. We are also systematically discriminated by the police, no matter how "good" or "integrated" we are. That is a fact which is not only true in a few countries but all over the world. Our brothers and sisters in Britain are at the point, where they defend themselves against this daily oppression and harassment. We have great respect for this step.

### **The UK is covered by riots**

Protests and street fighting are spreading all over UK. In addition to various areas of London, like Tottenham, Hackney and Peckham, cities like Liverpool, Nottingham, Birmingham, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester and Kent are already covered by the so-called "riots". Dozens of shops and businesses are burned to the ground. Even houses and cars were set on fire. Meanwhile, more than 600 activists were arrested, the government has announced its decision to exercise the most severe measures against activists and appealed publicly to all citizens, to report to the police if they know participants of the protests from their own families and friends (!). This was coupled with suggestions that it was not a minor offense, if it fails to give the police report.

Already a 26-year-old man was killed by shot by police. His name was not announced yet - probably not to give the movement even more faces.

Meanwhile, 50 policemen were injured, Prime Minister David Cameron stopped his holiday, and the media claim that residents would demand the use of the British army against the militants. The latter is obviously a warning to what means the British government is prepared to do.

### **Racist Police**

It all started with Mark Duggan, 29-year-old father of four children. He was shot during a planned police arrest. Interestingly, in the British media almost never mentions that Duggan is a black British. They want to hide the motives of the police who killed this unarmed young man apparently for no other reason than racism. The racial oppression of black people, national oppression of migrants, the super-exploitation they experience as workers – all this takes place not only at the workplace and the education system but in all areas of capitalist society. Add to this that it is also not the first time that a black worker was shot dead for no reason.

## **Poverty, hopelessness, harassment ... resistance!**

The bourgeois media also do not show how big the poverty and hopelessness of the British youth is, especially of the immigrants and black people. After all, the government implemented austerity measures, the toughest since the Second World War, which resulted in an unemployment rate of nearly 8%. Unemployment is particularly high among immigrants and black people. One in five black people is unemployed. Already before the Tories came to power every second black teenager between 16 and 24 years was unemployed! Current surveys for 2011 do not exist yet. But it is only logical that the number of unemployed black youth has not reduced since then, but has probably increased rather significantly.

No wonder then that it is mainly the young who are participating in the uprising of the poor. Especially the first two nights the 14 to 17-year-olds have led the street battles. Since then, now, older activists are involved in the uprising. It is precisely the poorer, the lower, the oppressed layers of the working class – including the young, the racially and nationally oppressed layers – that are often ready to resist against the massive oppression and exploitation. And this part of the working class constitutes the largest mass, the heart of our class.

How absurd is – given the present development - the theory of the League for the Fifth International that the labour aristocracy constitutes the core layer of the working class (at least in imperialist countries like the UK). In fact, this part of our class is – as Lenin put it – "*the craft-union, narrow-minded, selfish, case-hardened, covetous, and petty-bourgeois "labour aristocracy", imperialist-minded, and imperialist-corrupte, (...). That is incontestable.*

In contrast to the false assumption of LFI, the oppressed, the lower layers of the working class can play a central role in taking the class struggle against capitalist oppression on the streets. This is what we see today in Great Britain.

## **The political situation in Britain: a pre-revolutionary development**

It is crucial that activists in Britain have a correct assessment of the political situation, derive the right political perspectives, and try to implement them – as much as it is possible for them given their strength – into practice. The worldwide decline of capitalism has also shaken the economic and political system of Britain deeply. Spreading poverty and unemployment and welfare cuts are the result. It is inevitable that this historic crisis of the capitalist system provokes sharp class struggles, including a number of (pre) revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations. That is why we from the RKOB speak of a world-historical period in which humanity is faced with the alternative "socialism or barbarism".

The uprising of the poor in Britain - as Darcus Howe noted correctly – is part of a wave of revolutionary events in the recent past: the Arab Revolution and the general strikes and occupations in Greece and Spain.

Already in the autumn of 2010 hundreds of thousands of youth held a mass protest in Britain, which culminated in the storming of the Tory party headquarters. This was followed on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2011 by a day of action organized by the TUC with half a million demonstrators. And eventually on 30 June 750,000 employees in public service went on strike. In short, after the mass protests of the youth in the education sector and the strikes of the trade unions, the lower strata of the working class, blacks and migrants have now entered the battlefield of class struggle with their uprising. All this underscores that Britain is going through a pre-revolutionary development.

## **What has to be done?**

What are the key tasks? The RKOB answers: the goal must be the expansion of the riots - mainly lead by the lower strata of the working class – to the participation of the entire working class. The riots in poor neighborhoods must be transformed to a nationwide revolution. That will not happen overnight and certainly not spontaneous.

Until now, there is no connection, no solidarity with the uprising of the poor from the side of the unions and the anti-cuts movement that existed in Britain since months. But this is necessary in order not to remain at the level of individual street fights, but rather to fight shoulder to shoulder with organized workers who are probably on strike. The RKOB says: activists need to stand up for a radical change within the labor movement, trade unions, progressive parties and alliances. These organizations should not longer stand beside the insurrections. They need to show solidarity with the uprising of the poor. They need to contribute on the extension of the struggle and therefore mobilize workers at their workplace to take active part in mass actions.

The split between the different layers of the working class must be overcome. But we can only overcome the split during a common struggle. Actually the lower strata of the working class is fighting, is acting as the strike team of our class. But the other parts of the working class have to be mobilized now to take part of the insurrections and to fight for the interests and goals of the whole class.

## **The uprising of the poor should be connected with a general strike of the workers' movement!**

The aim must be to connect the so-called riots with a mass strike up to a general strike in the workplace and in education sector. In this way, the working class be united and won over to the perspective of a general strike in connection with an insurrection. By this we mean a general strike, which is associated with the arming of the working class and an orientation to the overthrow of the government and its replacement by a workers' government. Such a workers' government would be a government that rests on mass action councils (soviets), in which the workers and the oppressed in the factories and neighbourhoods are organised and elect their delegates which are at any time replaceable.

Such a perspective must begin with the immediate requirements of combat. Here we have first of all the defence of the urban areas of the poor against the police force. The struggle against police violence requires the building of self-defense units by the activists to protect the urban districts against the repressive machinery of the capitalists - the police and possibly military. The building of such self-defense units must be carried out naturally first of all by those affected in the districts of the poor. But it is also necessary that the organized labour movement - trade unions, progressive parties and alliances - participate in the formation of such self-defense units active. Out of such units could then later emerge workers militias - armed bodies of the working class and the oppressed.

Hand in hand with defending the urban districts the building of action committees must take place. They are an important means to provide the movement with structures and to prevent unelected representatives to sell out the struggle. Such action committees could emerge out of mass meetings in the neighborhoods, workplace and schools where the people elect delegates. These delegates must be permanently accountable for their words and deeds and recallable by the mass meetings. In this way a movement can be build with controllable delegates who can coordinate regionally and nationally and who are constantly under control of the base of the movement. Thus also the biggest enemies in our own ranks, the bureaucrats of the trade unions and the Labour Party, the careerists and traitors can be branded and exposed by the movement.

Today it is more obvious than ever: those in the British Left who stand aside from the riots, reduce themselves to comment on the events or who congratulate the movement from outside but are not part of this movement, those who refuse to close the ranks with the rebels, these people have no right to consider themselves as revolutionary!

Because history and the people who make history will judge us and our organizations primarily by our action and deeds, and not by our words.

## **Looting is no solution!**

The resistance of the proletarian youth on the streets of Britain is an important factor. The labour movement must deal with the demands of these young people. It must fight together with the proletarian youth on the streets. But it is also necessary to prevent damages which hit the workers in the neighbourhoods. Workers' belongings should not be destroyed during the insurrections. The labour movement – together with organized committees of the proletarian youth – must make sure that the houses and cars of individuals (mostly of the workers) are not set on fire.

The looting of shops and pharmacies is understandable given the massive poverty of the people. Nevertheless, it is much more useful if these actions are coordinated by the labour movement and the committees of the workers, the migrants and young people. They should not be committed as random looting. Rather the committees have to set the distribution of food and medicine under the control of the labour movement and the committees themselves. In this way all people will receive exactly the goods of daily life that they need. At the same time, this also prevents that the shops and supermarkets will be set on fire. Otherwise it hits the daily supply of the people living there. The credo has to be: everything that helps our class and which from our class can benefit, is good. The arbitrary destruction and the looting of supplies is not part of it!

## **The Road to Revolution**

The ruling class is fighting a preventive war and uses 16,000 police officers (in London alone) against the poor, the blacks and the young people. In contrary to the naive dreams of the petty-bourgeois left, a peaceful transition to socialism is impossible. The path to socialism is bound to the civil war of the workers and oppressed. This civil war must aim to overthrow the capitalist class through a revolution and to expropriate them, as well as to build a workers' government on a socialist basis. The civil war requires participating in its preparations. It requires that the labour movement as well as single activists fight together with the young people during the insurrections. If one has the opportunity to participate at the insurrections it is absolutely necessary to show solidarity not only in words but in actions.

The overthrow of the capitalist class and a successful revolution needs a successful strategy of the working class. We need to build up a revolutionary party of the fighting masses, which is capable of developing and implementing such a strategy and which leads the vanguard of the working class. The revolutionary organization RKOB has the goal to build up such a revolutionary party worldwide.

Today Britain is set ablaze by the so-called riots. It has to be the goal of our class to combine the uprisings of the poor with the strategy to revolution. Revolutions are the locomotives of history - but to guarantee that the revolution can be fulfilled is only given if the revolutionary party becomes its platoon leader. Today the building of such a revolutionary party is more urgent than ever before!

Class against class,  
Force against force,  
Socialism or Barbarism!