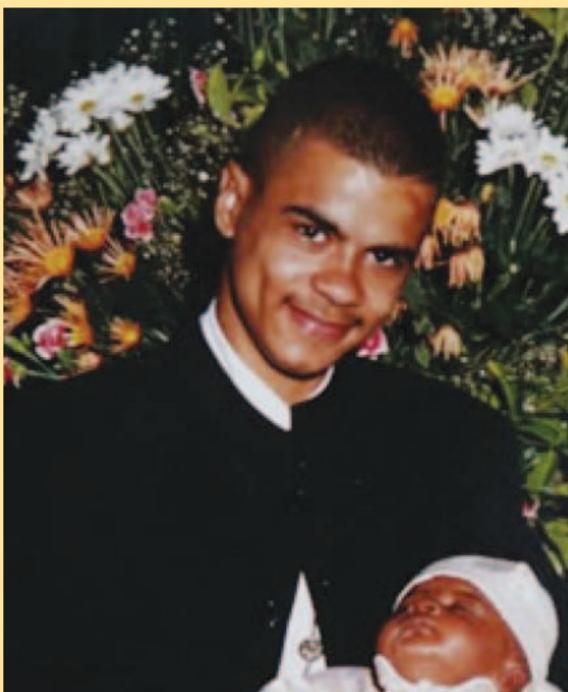


YOUTH REVOLT SHAKES ENGLAND



For four days and nights starting on August 8, massive unrest swept through London and other cities in England, shaking that imperialist country to its foundations. What sparked it off was a vicious police murder of Mark Duggan (above), a 29-year-old black man, in Tottenham in north London. Duggan was pinned to the ground by several cops and killed with a shot to the chest. That night Tottenham was turned upside down, as barricades went up and street fighting between youth and cops erupted. In the following days, the flames broke out in many places in and around London and spread to other major cities.

British politicians and media—from the right wing to the liberal wing of the bourgeoisie—denounced the youth as “criminals” intent on “mindless violence.” This is shameless hypocrisy, coming from representatives of a system that was built on the slave trade, and that today is a close partner of the U.S. in an empire that ruthlessly exploits billions of people and is enforced at gunpoint in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.

There was a real sense among the youth in the streets that here was a chance to fight back against the police that routinely brutalize and humiliate them. Black people in Britain, for example, are seven times more likely to be stopped and searched by police than whites. On top of this, drastic cutbacks in government programs, dealing with basic necessities like health and housing, are devastating people already caught in desperate poverty.

All this has led to mounting frustration and anger, not only among the “permanently unemployed” and others at the very bottom, but also among the working poor, students, and others. What took place in the streets of Britain was a revolt against the hated established order. And the oppressive state that enforces that order is increasingly losing legitimacy in the eyes of millions, among those at the very bottom and more broadly throughout society. And through all the complexity and contradictoriness, one key thing the four days of youth revolt revealed was the *potential* of the masses of people to not just shake up the existing order, but to radically remake society, IF they have leadership that bases itself on the largest interests of humanity and that has a real strategy for revolution.

British Prime Minister Cameron declared that “nothing was off the table” in going after people allegedly involved in the unrest—a threat to bring down vicious repression on whole communities of the oppressed. For now, the government has regained control of the streets. But the four hot days of August have left a strong impression on many, that things *can* change. A 23-year-old man in a London neighborhood said a few days later, “I loved Hackney during the riot. I loved every minute of it. It was great to see the people coming together to show the authorities that they cannot just come out here bullying.”

