

We salute the rise of the workers' movement in Europe

In 2020, the crisis of capitalism with the Covid 19 pandemic shook the world economy. Millions of workers lost their jobs, all workers suffered heavy wage cuts and important sectors of the workers were forced to work in very bad and dangerous conditions.

"Frontline" workers, especially women, were "celebrated," but had to struggle for some recognition through modest wage increases. The bosses used this period to increase exploitation, impose social setbacks, in the name of "bailing out" the economy, and received billions in public money.

Once the pandemic was over, the bosses and governments called for a general mobilization to boost the economy. This has meant increased profits and super-exploitation. Inflation began to rise, lowering real wages.

The workers' resistance began to organize, at different levels, step by step; The need for higher wages was wide-spread. The invasion of Ukraine greatly aggravated the conflicts and rivalries between Russian and Western imperialism. Oil, gas and food prices have skyrocketed, making the workers and the masses pay the consequences of this reactionary war. Sanctions and militarization have brought inflation to high levels, causing a brutal impoverishment of the workers and peoples.

"Our time is now!"

In all countries, demands for higher wages and better working conditions have begun to grow: mobilizations, strikes, demonstrations, have increasingly become the way to impose them on the bosses. It is a trend, with different levels and rhythms, that can be seen in all countries; The class struggle, the strength of the workers when they struggle together, the importance of the working class, have imposed themselves more and more.

Let us give some examples

In **Germany**, a wave of powerful mobilizations, strikes unseen for decades, has developed in many sectors, with concrete demands that have gone higher than before. There was a "new spirit" among the workers, more determination to win and a general feeling of support for those engaged in the struggle: the workers of health care, education, public transport experienced this, as the government and the bosses could not mobilize other sectors against the strikers. The reformist trade union leaders had to take this situation into account, they were forced into more radical demagoguery and even prolonged strikes. The bosses, trade union leaders and the coalition government have reached a compromise in order to stop the wave of strikes, with an increase in wages, well below official inflation. A new generation of worker activists has been formed in this struggle, gaining more confidence in themselves and in the strength of the workers. It is obvious that other struggles will follow.

In **Italy**, the far-right government at the service of big capital has launched a brutal attack against the working class, the poor, migrants. The labor market has been more liberalized and more precarious, social assistance has been blocked, the minimum wage has been removed from the agenda, special protection of migrants has been abolished. Under these conditions, the struggle for better working conditions, to increase wages and stop layoffs is developing: for example, in the Stellantis and Arcelor Mittal plants, in the logistics, transport, health care and social sectors, while the exemplary struggle led by the GKN workers' collective continues.

In **Norway**, the bourgeoisie and the big monopolies are the "profiteers of the war", mainly because of the high gas prices. Thus, the real income of the workers has fallen over the last three years. After four days of trade union action in the private sector, involving 25,000 workers, in April the reformist leadership of the trade union confederation negotiated a

wage compromise that compensates for inflation for only a minority. However, the workers have experienced their strength and ability to repel attacks on their living and working conditions.

In **Spain**, inflation is 7.5%, unemployment is 13.1% (among young people it is 29.26%) and 28% of the population lives below the poverty line. Two large demonstrations with hundreds of thousands of participants were held in support of the public health system, organized by local initiatives. Sectors of workers (cleaning, hostels, etc.) who had little contact with the unions, entered the struggle, trying to coordinate their battle. On the agenda is the need to organize opposition to the project of privatization of the public sector. With the recent local elections and the anticipation of the general elections, the political landscape is unstable and right-wing parties are threatening to come to power. In **Denmark**, where the profits of the big monopolies are high, the workers' expectations for real wage increases in national negotiations were high. Instead, the bosses and trade union leaders entered into an agreement with little real increase and left it to local negotiations to achieve something more, hindering the strength of the collective struggle of the class. Some workers are beginning to take charge of the struggle for higher wages, while the bosses reject this. The issue of "social dumping" and super-exploitation, especially of migrant workers, is an important issue for the workers who are fighting and strengthening their solidarity. The government also decided to turn a public holiday into a working day, in order to finance the increase in military spending, which provoked a large demonstration and protest.

In **Turkey**, presidential and parliamentary elections dominated the political scene. They have concealed the dramatic 100% inflation in the first four months of 2023, and all the big problems that the workers and peoples are facing, such as the earthquake. In Turkey, where 60.4% of the population lives below the hunger line and 87% below the poverty line, where the Central Bank's assets have gone negative, where it is inevitable that the restrictive monetary policy that will be followed by the government will cause an explosion in unemployment, it is inevitable that all these problems will be on the agenda again after the elections while the country will no longer have the same conditions of yesterday's policies.

France: "No to 64 years"

The powerful movement of demonstrations (so far 13 of them, including May Day) and strikes that began in January 2023, against the reform of the pension system, has mobilized millions of workers, young people, women, etc. The movement rallied around the concrete demand: "No to 64 years", which was supported by a broad coalition of the main trade unions, youth organizations, with the support of a wide range of associations, left-wing political parties, etc. This movement is also a continuation of previous movements against anti-worker and anti-people reforms and is taking place in the context of a wave of strikes for higher wages, which began in 2019. The pension counter-reform has led to the common sentiment: "Enough is enough, this time it is no", "No to exploitation, no to working to the grave".

This movement has many aspects that, taken together, have constituted its strength, its determination, expressed by the slogan "We are not giving up". At the forefront of this struggle is the working class that has participated in all the cities, in the production centers of the whole country, etc. It has attracted large sectors of the workers and the masses, and even today 90% of the workers are against that reform, even though the government imposed it. The way in which it imposed the reform, using all the tricks of the Constitution – many of them completely unknown to the masses – using provocations and police repression, increased the determination of the workers and the youth.

The movement failed to block the economy, even though important sectors were engaged in continuous strikes. But the blockade of the economy is an important factor in the necessary balance of power to make the government re-treat. This is a lesson that many workers have in mind today.

The general feeling is the satisfaction of having demonstrated the strength of the workers' movement, its ability to unite around concrete demands. There are many lessons to share and discuss; There is a growing awareness that it is the whole system, the imperialist capitalist system, that is the main obstacle to be overcome. That movement was followed with great sympathy internationally. It stimulated the workers, the militants and animated them in the idea "yes, it is possible for the workers to fight, unite, take the initiative" against capital and its system.

Some conclusions

The serious consequences of the policy adopted in the pandemic to impoverish the workers and peoples, inflation and the enormous costs of the war in Ukraine, have led to an awakening of the workers' movement in Europe at different levels, going in the same direction with similar demands.

The workers and peoples are at a turning point, as they can no longer bear the constant attacks of the capitalists and their states. In this struggle, the consciousness of the workers has grown and their self-confidence has increased.

Forced by the growing attacks of capital and the growing inability of the system to meet the needs and expectations of the workers and popular masses, the struggle will develop and intensify in the coming period.

It is our duty to develop class consciousness, to combat the reformist influence promoted by reformist and opportunist forces, to point the way, to strengthen unity and to direct the struggle against the entire capitalist system.

Capitalism is destroying our lives: this system is not ours, we must fight it!

Only socialism, a new and better society without exploitation of the workers, can solve the problems in favor of the working class, the broad masses and the peoples.

France, May 2023

European Meeting of the International Conference of Marxist-Leninist Parties and Organizations (ICMLPO)

Communist Party of the Workers of Denmark – APK

Communist Party of the Workers France – PCOF

Organization for the Construction of a Communist Workers' Party of Germany (Work Future)

Communist Platform – for the Communist Party of the Proletariat of Italy

Marxist-Leninist Group Revolusjon – Norway

Communist Party of Spain (Marxist-Leninist) – PCEML

Party of Labor (EMEP) – Turkey