



Austerity in Spain

The worst attacks on our living conditions (up till now): How far will they go? How can we respond?

In 1984, the PSOE (Socialist Party) government brought in the first Labour Reform. Just three months ago, the present PP government (the right wing Popular Party) brought in the most serious Labour Reforms up till now. In 1985, the PSOE government brought in the first Pensions Reform; in 2011, a different PSOE government brought in another. When will the next one be? For more than 30 years, the living conditions of the workers have gradually got worse and worse, but since 2010 the deterioration has speeded up at a dizzying rate and with the new measures by the PP government, it has reached levels which, unfortunately, are already low compared to what lies in store. There has also been a sharpening of police repression: violence against the students in Valencia last February, savage beating of the miners and the use of rubber bullets which injured children among others. Meanwhile, Congress has been explicitly protected by the police in the face of the spontaneous demonstrations which have been developing since July.

We, the IMMENSE MAJORITY, exploited and oppressed, but also indignant, we workers of the public and private sectors, the unemployed, students, pensioners, immigrants...we are posing a lot of questions about everything that's going on. We need to pose these questions collectively, in the streets, on the squares, in the workplaces, so that we can come up with answers together and make a massive, powerful and sustained response.

The collapse of capitalism

Governments change, but the crisis keeps on getting worse and we keep getting hit harder. Each summit meeting of the EU, of the G20 etc is presented as the 'definite solution'...and the next day it's revealed as a total failure. We are told that the blows aimed at us will reduce the risks to the economy, and the next day we find that the **exact opposite** is true. After so much bloodletting in our living standards, the IMF recognises that we will have to wait until 2025 (!) to get back to the living standards we had in 2007. **The crisis advances implacably and inexorably, leaving in its wake millions of broken lives.**

Of course, some countries are doing better than others, but we have to look at the world as a whole. The problem is not limited to Spain, Greece, or Italy, nor can it be reduced to the 'euro crisis'. Germany is on the edge of recession and has 7 million mini-jobs (with wages around 400 euro a month). In the USA, unemployment is soaring at the same speed as house repossessions. In China, the economy has been slowing down for 7 months, despite a crazy construction bubble which

has meant that in Beijing alone there are 2 million empty apartments. We are experiencing in our bones the world-wide and historic crisis of the capitalist system which is pulling in every state, regardless of its official ideology, whether 'communist' as in China or Cuba, '21st century socialism' as in Ecuador or Venezuela, 'socialist' in France, 'democratic' in the US, 'liberal' in Spain and Germany. Capitalism, having created the world market, has for a century been a reactionary system which has plunged humanity into the worse kind of barbarism: two world wars, innumerable regional wars, the destruction of the environment....and, having benefited from moments of artificial economic growth, based on financial and speculative bubbles of all kinds, today, since 2007, it is crashing into the worst crisis in its history with firms, banks and states sinking into bankruptcy. The result of such a debacle is a gigantic humanitarian disaster. While famine and poverty spread throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America, in the 'rich' countries millions of people are losing their jobs, hundreds of thousands are being evicted from their homes, the majority have nothing left at the end of the month, the increasing cost and reduced availability of social services are making life increasingly precarious, and on top of all this is the crushing weight of direct or indirect taxation.

The democratic state is the dictatorship of the capitalist class

Capitalism divides society into two poles: the **minority pole** of the capitalist class which possesses everything and produces nothing; and the **majority pole** of the exploited classes which produce everything and receive less and less. The capitalist class, the 1% of the population as the Occupy movement in the US put it, appears to be more and more corrupt, arrogant and insulting. It is piling up riches with indecent cheek; it shows itself to be quite unfeeling towards the suffering of the majority and everywhere it demands that we put up with austerity. So why, despite all the big movements of social indignation which unfolded in 2011 (Spain, Greece, USA, Egypt, Chile, etc) is it able to apply policies which go against the interests of the majority? Why is our struggle, despite the precious experience it has brought us, so far below what is necessary?

An initial answer can be found in **the fraud of the democratic state**. This is presented as the emanation of all citizens, but in reality it is the exclusive and excluding organ of the capitalist class. It serves the latter's interests entirely, and to do this it has two hands: the **right hand** made up of the police, the prisons, the courts, the laws, the bureaucracy, which it uses to repress us and crush any attempt at revolt. And a **left**

hand made up of parties based on all kinds of ideology, of trade unions which are apparently independent, of social cohesion services supposedly there to protect us....in sum, of illusions to deceive us, divide us and demoralise us.

What has been the result of all the votes cast every four years? Has any government emerged from the election and carried out one of its promises? Whatever their ideology, whose side have they been on? The electors, or Capital? What has been the result of the countless reforms and changes they have made in education, social security, economics, politics, etc? Haven't they really been a real expression of the principle that 'everything must change in order to stay the same'? As the 15 May movement said at the time: *"they call it democracy and it's not, it's a dictatorship and we don't see it"*.

Faced with worldwide misery, worldwide revolution against misery!

Capitalism is leading us into generalised misery. But we should not see only misery in misery! In the entrails of this system is the principal exploited class, the proletariat, which, with its associated labour – labour not limited to industry and agriculture but including education, health, social services etc – ensures that the whole of this society functions. And by the same token, this class has the capacity to paralyse the capitalist machine and open the door to the creation of a society where life is not sacrificed on the altar of capitalist profit, where the economy of competition is replaced by production founded on solidarity and aiming at the full satisfaction of human need. The way of life in this society, by contrast, is based on competition, on the struggle of each against all, on atomisation and division.

An understanding of these problems, open and fraternal debate about them, the critical re-appropriation of the experience of over two centuries of struggle, all that can give us the means to go beyond this situation, to respond to the attacks. The very day (11 July) that prime minister Rajoy announced the new measures we saw was the beginning of a response. Many people went to Madrid to express their solidarity with the miners. This experience of unity and solidarity was concretised in the days that followed with spontaneous demonstrations organised through social networks. It was an initiative by public sector workers, outside the unions. The question is how to do we carry on with it, knowing that the struggle will be long and difficult? Here are some proposals:

United struggle: unemployed, public and private sector workers, apprentices and employees, pensioners, students, immigrants: TOGETHER, WE CAN. No sector must remain isolated and imprisoned in its own corner. Faced with a society of division and atomisation, we have to show the power of solidarity.

Open general assemblies: capital will remain strong as long as we leave everything in the hands of professional politicians and specialists in trade union representation, who always betray us. Assemblies to reflect, discuss and decide together. So that we become responsible for what has been agreed, so that we experience the satisfaction of being united, so that we can break the barriers of solitude and isolation and cultivate empathy and confidence.

Look for international solidarity: defending the nation makes us cannon fodder in wars; xenophobia and racism divide us, set us against the workers of the whole world when they are the only ones we can trust to create the force capable of pushing back the attacks of capital.

Group together in the workplaces, in the neighbourhoods, in the collectives, on the internet, to reflect on everything that's going on, to organise meetings and debates which will prepare the struggles to come. It's not enough just to fight! We have to fight with the clearest possible consciousness of where we are going, of what are our real weapons, of who are our friends and who are our enemies!

Every social change is inseparable from an individual change. Our struggle cannot be limited to a simple change in the political and economic structures. It's a change in the social system and thus in our own lives, in our way of seeing things, in our aspirations. This is the only way we can develop the strength to resist the innumerable traps we will meet along the way, the physical and moral blows that will be aimed at us. A change of mentality in the direction of solidarity, collective consciousness, which will cement our unity today, but will also be the pillar of a future society free from the ferocious competition and commercialism of capitalist society

International Communist Current 16 July 2012

If you want to contact us, collaborate, work together, you can find us as espana@internationalism.org or via es.internationalism.org.

This leaflet is available as a PDF so it can be reproduced and distributed.