

Against the attacks of the ruling class, we need a massive, united struggle!

In all countries, in all sectors, the working class is facing an unbearable degradation of its living and working conditions. All governments, whether of the right or the left, traditional or populist, are imposing one attack after the other as the world economic crisis goes from bad to worse.

Despite the fear generated by an oppressive health crisis, the working class is beginning to react. In recent months, in the USA, in Iran, in Italy, in Korea, in Spain, France and Britain, struggles have broken out. These are not massive movements: the strikes and demonstrations are still weak and dispersed. Even so, the ruling class is keeping a wary eye on them, conscious of the widespread, rumbling anger.

How are we to face up to the attacks of the ruling class? Are we to remain isolated and divided, everyone in 'their own' firm or sector? That's a guarantee of powerlessness. So how can we develop a united, massive struggle?

Towards a brutal degradation of living and working conditions

Prices are soaring, particularly for basic necessities: food, energy, transport...In 2021 inflation was already higher than after the financial crisis of 2008. In the USA, it has reached 6.8%, the highest in 40 years. In Europe, in recent months, energy costs have jumped by 26%! Behind these figures, the concrete reality is more and more people struggling to feed themselves, to find accommodation, to keep warm, to travel. World-wide, food prices have risen by 28%, directly threatening more than a billion people with malnutrition in the poorest countries, above all in Africa and Asia.

The deepening economic crisis leads to increasingly bitter competition between states. To maintain profits, the answer is always the same, everywhere, in all sectors, private as well as public: reduce staff, impose speed ups, cut budgets, including spending on workers' health and safety. In January, in France, masses of teachers came out onto the streets to protest against shocking working conditions. They are living in a daily capitalist hell because of a lack of staff and material. In the demonstrations a profoundly justified slogan was on their banners: "*What's happening to us goes back to way before Covid!*"

What's being inflicted on health workers shows this very clearly. The pandemic has merely shone a light on a lack of medicines, care workers, nurses, beds, masks, protective

clothing, oxygen...everything! The chaos and exhaustion reigning in the hospitals since the beginning of the pandemic is nothing less than the result of the vicious cuts made by all governments, in all countries, for decades. To the point where the World Health Organisation was obliged, in its latest report, to ring the alarm bells: "*Over half of needs are not being met. Across the world there is a lack of 900, 000 midwives and 6 million nurses...this already existing scarcity has been exacerbated by the pandemic and the pressures on overworked staff*". In many poor countries, a large part of the population has not been able to access the vaccines for the simple reason that capitalism is based on the hunt for profit.

The working class is not just made up of industrial workers: it includes all the wage labourers, part time and precarious workers, unemployed, many students, retired workers...

So, yes, "*What's happening to us goes back to way before Covid!*". The pandemic is the product of a dying capitalism whose insurmountable crisis it is making worse. Not only is this system showing its powerlessness and disorganisation in the face of a pandemic which has already claimed 10 million lives, especially among the exploited and the poor, but it will continue to degrade our living and working conditions, it will continue to increase redundancies and precarious jobs, to pressure and impoverish workers. Under the weight of its contradictions, it will continue to be caught up in endless imperialist wars, to provoke new ecological catastrophes – all of which will provoke further chaos, conflicts, and even worse pandemics. This system of exploitation has nothing to offer humanity but suffering and poverty.

Only the struggle of the working class is the bearer of another perspective, that of communism: a society without class, without nations, without wars, where all forms of oppression will be abolished. The only perspective is the world communist revolution!

A growing anger and militancy

In 2020, all around the world, a lead curtain came down: repeated lock-downs, emergency hospitalisations and millions of deaths. After the revival of workers' militancy that we saw in several countries during 2019, particularly with the fight against the pension 'reforms' in France, workers' struggles came to a brutal halt. But today, once again, anger

is rising and a fighting spirit is gaining ground:

- In the USA, a series of strikes hit industrial groups like Kellogs, John Deere, PepsiCo, but also the health sector and private clinics, as in New York;
- In Iran, this summer, workers from more than 70 sites in the oil sector came out on strike against low wages and the high cost of living. Something not seen for 42 years!
- In South Korea, the unions had to organise a general strike for more social benefits, against precarious jobs and unequal wages;
- In Italy, there have been a number of days of action against lay-offs and the suppression of the minimum wage;
- In Germany, the public services union felt obliged, faced with a growing mobilisation, to brandish the threat of strikes to obtain wage increases;
- In Spain, in Cadiz, the metal workers mobilised against an average wage cut of 200 euros a month. Public employees in Catalonia demonstrated against the intolerable resort to temporary work (over 300,000 state employees have precarious jobs). Struggles took place in the railways in Majorca, at Vestas, Unicaja, among the metal workers of Alicante, in different hospitals, all of them against redundancies;
- In France, the same kind of discontent has been expressed by strikes or demonstrations in transport, recycling, education;
- The same in Britain where we have seen strikes and other actions in the universities, by recycling workers, in public transport, health and other sectors.

Prepare the struggles ahead

All these struggles are important because they show that the working class is not ready to accept all the sacrifices which the bourgeoisie is trying to impose on it. But we also have to recognise the weaknesses of our class. All these actions have been controlled by the unions who everywhere divide and isolate workers with sectional demands, containing and sabotaging the struggles. In Cadiz, the unions tried to trap the workers in localism, in a “citizens movement” to “save Cadiz”, as if the interests of the working class lie in the defence of regional or national concerns and not in linking up with their class brothers and sisters across sectors and frontiers! The workers have also found it hard to organise themselves, to take control of the struggles, to come together in sovereign general assemblies and fight against the divisions imposed by the unions.

A further danger facing the working class is giving up the defence of class demands by joining up with movements that have nothing to do with its own interests and methods of struggle. We saw this with the “Yellow Vests” in France or, more recently, in China, when the collapse of the housing giant Evergrande (a spectacular symbol of China’s massive indebtedness), which mainly provoked protests by ruined small property owners. In Kazakhstan, massive strikes in the energy sector were in the end derailed into a “people’s” revolt without any perspective and quickly got caught up in conflicts between bourgeois cliques vying for power. Each time that workers dilute themselves in the “people” as “citizens” demanding that the capitalist state “changes things”, they condemn themselves to powerlessness.

The movement against the CPE: an inspiration for future struggles

In 2006, in France, the bourgeoisie was forced to withdraw its attack in the face of a massive struggle which threatened to extend to other sectors

At the time, the students, many of them part-time workers, rose up against a ‘reform’ known as the Contrat Première Embauché (First Employment Contract) or CPE, opening the door to underpaid and superexploited jobs. They rejected isolation, division, sectional demands.

Against the unions, they opened up their general assemblies to all categories of workers and the retired. They understood that the fight against precarious jobs for the young was a symbol of the struggle against job insecurity for everyone.

Gaining solidarity between sectors and generations, this movement, demonstration after demonstration, grew in breadth. It was this dynamic towards unity which scared the bourgeoisie and forced it to withdraw the CPE.

In order to prepare the struggle, we must, wherever we can, get together to discuss and draw the lessons of past struggles. It is vital to put forward methods of struggle which express the strength of the working class, and which, at certain moments in history, have shaken the bourgeoisie and its system:

- The search for support and solidarity beyond “my” sector, town, region or country;
- The widest possible discussion about the needs of the struggle, in no matter what firm, sector or country;
- The autonomous organisation of the struggle, above all through general assemblies that don’t leave control in the hands of the unions or other organs of bourgeois containment.

Prepare for the united and autonomous struggles of tomorrow!

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We are giving out this leaflet in all the countries where our militant forces are present. On the first weekend of March we are organising online public meetings in English where we will discuss the crisis of the system, the class struggle and the role of revolutionaries. If you want to join in the discussion, write to us at:

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or follow our website at:

www.internationalism.org