

IV Trade union conference - Slai Cobas communication

23 – 25 May 2008 - *Birlesik Metal-Is, Gonen Balikesir (Turkey)*

The present situation is characterised by a worsening of the crisis of capitalism at an international level and there are all the premises for the expansion of the crisis from the financial to the productive stage. In the next months the attack to life and work conditions of proletarians, to allow bourgeoisie to maintain its profits, and the exploitation are destined to increase, both in the advanced Western countries and in the less developed ones. Capitalisms is no more able to grant a perspective of development, of increase in salaries and of improvement of life conditions of the workers. **To continue to exist it must necessarily compress the “labour cost”** and, consequently, worsen the conditions of proletarians. Since Seventies of the last century the reduction of real salaries and of the rights of workers has been a main instrument to grant accumulation and this explains an only apparent paradox: crisis and stagnation continue and, contemporarily, profits grow exponentially.

The increasing competition among capitalisms, the contraposition of states, the hegemony of USA and the spreading of wars and nationalisms contribute to preserve the division among proletarians at an international level and to contrast the development of autonomous and independent struggles of the working class. Division among proletarians also originates from politics of political parties and trade unions of the “official” Left, which for a longtime have been under posed to the defence of their national capitalisms and have opposed the expression of whatever anti capitalistic perspective. Their tasks, in fact, are the management of the crisis of “their own” capitalism and the defence of the interest of “their own” national bourgeoisie on an international level. In Western countries “Centre Left” and “Centre Right” government have both conducted anti workers politics and have worsened the conditions of workers, as the Italian, French and British experiences demonstrate. The trade unions connected with ILO (International Labour Organization) are in the main part of the cases co responsible of this situation and **all** the “official” trade unions of Western countries have for a longtime became instruments for the control of workers, to force them to the interclass cooperation and to prevent a clearly anti capitalistic political and unionist perspective.

The division among workers at an international level is also reinforced by: 1) Western capitalists’ politics to transfer the production in the less developed countries, where they can obtain lower salaries and absence of union rights; 2) Savage exploitation of migrant workers in Western countries to favour a lowering of the general level of salaries. These two factors contribute to the development of workers competition and division, which are ideologically expressed with a growth of racism and with the involvement of workers into racist and nationalistic campaigns of national government. In this way, workers, instead of unite independently from their nationality and colours of their skin, instead of unite as members of the same working class, are pushed to compete, favouring their exploitation by capitalists.

We think that an action to find an international unity of the workers, of proletariat, on an anti capitalist perspective is necessary. A trade union unity, but also a political unity. Workers can rely on their force and organisation, on their unity and on the central fact that they are the main part of human beings.

This is not only necessary, but possible, although wars, although oppressive and ferocious exploitation and although Western countries, proclaiming themselves as defenders of democracy, maintain dictatorial regimes in several countries where they make their investments or export productions, to have labour at minimum cost and at minimum rights. Although this, capitalism is limping and worldwide answers and struggles from the proletarian part are developing.

Argentina has been the theatre of a main struggle during the phase of the general crisis of the country in 2001-2002. Workers of transports in **Italy** in 2003 have repeatedly and massively violated the anti strike law, asking consistent increases in salary, out of and against the lines of the official Italian trade unions Cgil - Cisl - Uil. In **Chorea** there has been a wave of demonstrations in 2004, guided by KTCU, for trade union rights and against war in Iraq. Besides in **Italy**, in 2004, workers of Fiat plant of Melfi stroke for a long time against the capitalist extra power in the factory. Maritime workers in **Corse** in 2005 blocked transports from and to the island, to combat the restructuring. Urban transport workers in **Teheran** in **Iran**, between the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006, mobilised against the Iranian state trade union and police repression (700 strikers was arrested by police) and to obtain collective bargaining (denied by the regime) and a salary increase to 600 USD. In **Mexico** at the end of 2006 there has been a popular and proletarian revolt in Oaxaca to defend life and work conditions, worsening thank

to the neo-liberist politics of the government. Since 2000 **China** is crossed by workers struggles, especially in the "special zones", where factories are co-financed by foreign capitals (Italian ones included). These struggles are often repressed even with homicides. Even in **Indonesia**, in recent years, workers are re-organising themselves, gathering round the Indonesian National Front for Labour Struggle (FNPBI), after the violent repression supported by the Western countries. Since 2007 in **Polonia** Fiat workers are mobilising and organising to obtain increases in salaries, although Solidarnosc has become for a long time a regime trade union. In **Serbia** Zastava workers mobilised for their salaries and against firing (4.500 workers) between August and September 2007.

And surely there are many other struggles that we are not reporting here or that have been silenced, as in Turkey, a country of which in Italy they talk about only to affirm that it couldn't enter European Union or as an area of investment and exploitation for Italian capitalists, who can find low wages and minimum rights compared with Italy.

The moment has arrived to link the threads of proletarian internationalism, of the common and unite proletarian struggle at a worldwide level. This is necessary to contrast a more and more ferocious capitalism, which, with wars and environment disasters, can lead to whole destruction of mankind.

Slai Cobas (Union of self organised and inter-categories workers), is a union built by self organised workers, organised in Base Committees, radically opposing concerted politics and inter-classes cooperation of the "official" trade unions Cgil, Cisl e Uil.

In Italy trade-union rights are reserved to the "official" trade unions which sign collective bargaining (the same that for many years have been ready to sale working conditions and rights). In this way capitalists can choose the trade unions to negotiate with or not. In the private sectors, labour delegates are elected by workers in the working places to form the Rappresentanze Sindacali Unitarie, which are organisms representing the interests of the workers of the firm, but there is a 33% special reserve of delegates for the "official" trade union, independently from the numbers of votes obtained by each union. In this way it happens that even in labour places where our union is the most voted, we are in minority in the RSU. This is only an example of the so called trade-union "democracy" in Italy.

On the contrary, we ask for equal and democratic trade-union rights directly for the workers and not for the trade unions. To make another example, in Italy workers have the right to gather in assembly during working time, but the assembly can be convened only by official trade union and not directly by the workers. And more and more frequently capitalists and official trade unions agree to allow only assemblies convened by the official trade unions. We ask for the right of all the workers to convene assemblies.

In this period we are organising the workers' resistance to restructuring in Fiat factories, which is attempting to pull down to us with political lay-offs, to intimidate our activists and to stop the development of the workers' fight. We are also among those who are organising the resistance of the workers of Malpensa airport in Milan against restructuring and even there our members have been repeatedly fired for reprisal. We led an important struggle for more than 18.000 precarious, working in public administration in Sicily. We are present both in the private and public sector in several Italian towns and in many labour categories. Our presence is fundamental in industrial plants. For us, SLAI Cobas is the instrument to reach the aim of a mass anti capitalist trade union, which is able to organise workers exceeding the fragmentation in many minor groups and the supremacy of "cooperative" official trade unions.

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