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Greece

Massive mobilisations in Greece against a slavery law

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In recent weeks, there has been a very strong mobilization in Greece against a draft law on working time and trade union freedoms.

The bill can be summarized as follows: to make people work more (10-hour day, extension of Sunday work, increase in the annual ceiling for overtime) while paying less (partial recovery in the form of “rest days”, reduction in the rate of overtime), and to impose serious attacks on the right to strike and to organise (with pressure to sign individual agreements).

Translation by the Prime Minister, the ultra-liberal Mitsotakis: “A law favourable to workers and allowing development”, which will clean up “the jungle of the world of work” and ensure the future of the young generations! In reality, it is a confirmation that the only project of the revanchist right-wing in power is to do everything to attract investors (and tourists) and to favour their cronies in Greek big business.

This project, for which the daily *Efimerida ton Syntakton* hesitates between “Welcome to the 19th century” and “Back to the Middle Ages”, received a first response with an encouraging national mobilization on 6 May. Various local initiatives followed, reflecting in depth a growing feeling since the autumn. And it was this working class pressure that forced the union leaderships, including that of GSEE, the single private sector federation led by a bureaucracy linked to Pasok and irrevocably compromised in the acceptance of the memoranda, to launch a call for a general strike for 10 June, which was put forward by the most combative unions.

From the 10 June strike to the vote on the law

Despite many obstacles (including threats of dismissals in the private sector, the ban on the strike by the sailors, who led it and succeeded), this day, without being a tidal wave, was a great success, with demonstrations in more than 70 towns and cities, and massive support for the mobilisation. In Athens, several tens of thousands of workers and young people demonstrated in three marches: the KKE (CP) and its trade union current PAME, the two federations GSEE and ADEDY (public sector) with Syriza and other reformist organisations, the grassroots unions and the anti-capitalist left. But as a sign of combativity, the processions were so dense that they joined!

Of course, in the evening of this beautiful day, the most clear-sighted knew that the union bureaucracies were going to put the brakes on, so as not to be overwhelmed, while the right displayed even more firmness. Instead of immediately calling for at least another national strike on the day of the vote, 16 June, GSEE fell back into silence and ADEDY called for a work stoppage which, under pressure from union members, became a strike call in extremis. Under these conditions, participation in the mobilization on the 16th was down. Nevertheless, all over the country, thousands of workers demonstrated, surrounding the Parliament in Athens.

The question that arises with more urgency after the vote of the law, in order to continue a victorious mobilization, is that of a trade union reorganization taking into account contradictory elements: even if the GSEE leadership has sold out, its national call to strike widened the mobilization thus felt as unitary; the activity of the combative rank and file trade unions alone will not be enough, and the trade union left has to elaborate a tactic of combative pressure preventing the retreats of the various trade union leadership. The fight only goes on!

23 June 2021

Athens

PS:

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